

# Fred Charles

FREDERICK CHARLES SLAUGHTER was a leading light within the very active Norwich branch of the Socialist League in the 1880s. The Socialist League was a revolutionary socialist organisation that had broken with Hyndman's Social Democratic Federation, some because of their dislike of the autocratic Hyndman, some because of their dislike of Hyndman and his politics.



When the Socialist League brought out its Manifesto in 1885 the socialists in Norwich enthusiastically welcomed it and set up a branch. Fred was instrumental in this. His small income enabled him to run a café as a centre for the movement. In early 1885 he set up the Norwich Pioneer Class for the Discussion of Socialism. Eleven people were recruited from this to help him found a branch. William Morris visited the branch to give it a boost, as did the tailoring worker Charles Mowbray from London and Fred Henderson from Bradford.

The Leaguers carried their propaganda into the countryside. Travelling six miles along bad roads in all kinds of weather to the village of St Faith's where an enthusiastic crowd was ready to hear about revolutionary ideas and set up a new branch. Fred and the other Leaguers drove hard for working class support and were deeply involved in agitation among the unemployed. By Easter 1886, the branch was drawing audiences of 1,000 to its open air meetings in the Market Place and its membership rose rapidly. By 1887 Fred, who had dropped his last name, had developed explicitly Anarchist Communist views alongside Mowbray and David Nicoll.

## The Battle of Ham Run

This was a time of high unemployment and on Friday 14th November 1887, 500 unemployed rioted after attending a meeting addressed by Mowbray and Henderson (then an Anarchist Communist who ended up as a Labour Mayor!). The "insulting tone of the Mayor, the unconcealed contempt for their fellows on the part of the councillors and aldermen... angered the crowd and they broke away". The mansions of the rich were attacked and their

windows smashed. Shops were looted and the incident became known as the Battle of Ham Run after the evidence of a police constable who testified to a looted ham being "run over" – handed back over – the heads of the crowd. For this, Mowbray and Henderson were sentenced to nine months and four months respectively on the treadmill of Norwich Castle prison.

League membership rose to 200 in Norwich, a fifth of total membership. Fred, though, seems to have been forced by local repression to leave Norwich, turning up in East London in early 1888 where he carried out mass propaganda alongside the old anti-parliamentary communist Joe Lane. They set up the East End Socialist Propaganda Committee with the support of local Socialist League Clubs and the foreign anarchist clubs: "commencing a systematic distribution from house to house... of leaflets, pamphlets... and other literature, as well as pasting up leaflets, bills, etc... they have besides commenced holding regular open-air meetings at about 20 places in the district". They exceeded this by establishing 27 pitches, although they had over-extended themselves and the agitation eventually ground to a halt.



Fred, "out of employment and in a desperate mood" was forced to go to Sheffield to obtain work. Here, with Doctor John Creaghe (who was to spend much of his later life as an active member of the Argentinian anarchist movement), he set up the paper the *Sheffield Anarchist* in 1891 – eight issues being published over four months, attracting prosecutions from the first issue.

Reminiscing about these days, Creaghe was to later write: "I cannot forget the time that Charles, who was then out of work, started with me the first number of the *Sheffield Anarchist*. He would do nothing for himself. If his chances of getting a £1,000 depended on his keeping an appointment, I am certain he would not be there and I am astonished how actively and steadily he worked for the cause he loved. I cannot say how often I regretted it when he had to leave me, for we spent some happy hours in that anything but sweet

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smelling den which served us as a club and office... How we laughed as we scribbled and enjoyed in anticipation the horror and rage of the enemy."

Indeed, Fred was remarkable for his generosity – most of his disposable income being given to tramps and beggars. He had been known to take off his coat and pawn it so he could give money to a fellow worker without money. The East End anarchist Ted Leggatt, who organised among the cart drivers, wrote that he had seen him "take his best boots off his feet and the last half crown out of his pocket and give them to a man he had never seen before..."

Another anarchist, David Nicoll, editor of the League paper *Commonweal*, remarked that "I, who knew him well, have often thought that Charles, Atheist and Anarchist as he was, had more of the spirit of Christ about him than those who talk so loudly of their Christianity".

The Sheffield socialist, poet and advocate of homosexual freedom, Edward Carpenter, wrote that he was: "one of the most devoted workers. No surrender or sacrifice for the 'Cause' was too great for him; and as to his own earnings or possessions, he practically gave them all away to tramps or the unemployed."

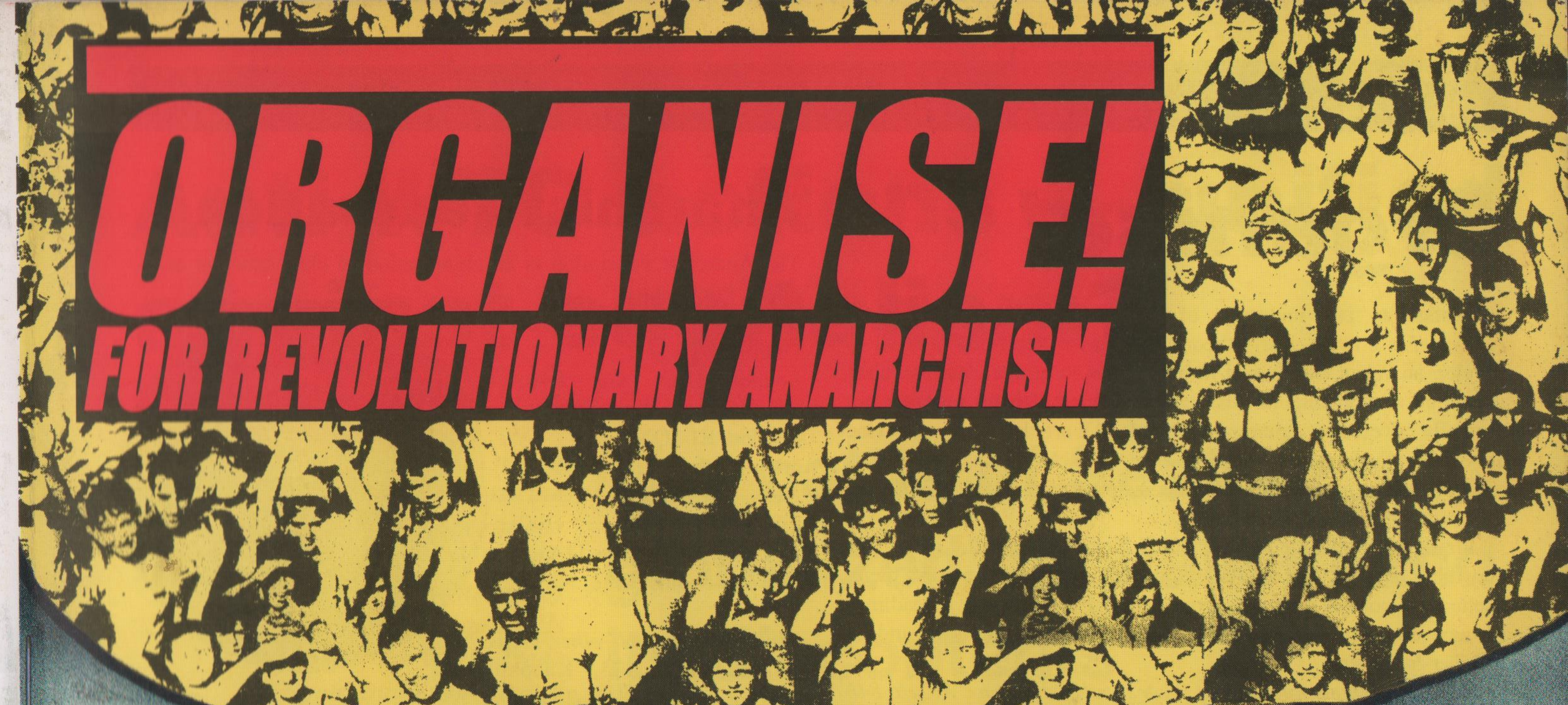
## The Walsall Anarchist Trial

Fred's failure to get a job in Sheffield forced him to move to Walsall where he obtained work in an iron foundry. Here he was caught up in provocation instigated by a French police agent. He and other local anarchists were arrested and charged with bomb manufacture in 1892.

At the trial, Fred said openly that it was all a police plot and that he thought the bombs were intended for use in tsarist Russia. When he found out that they were not, he washed his hands of the matter. This did not stop him getting a sentence of ten years of which he served seven and a half. One of the police inspectors involved admitted later in his memoirs that the whole affair had been a provocation and

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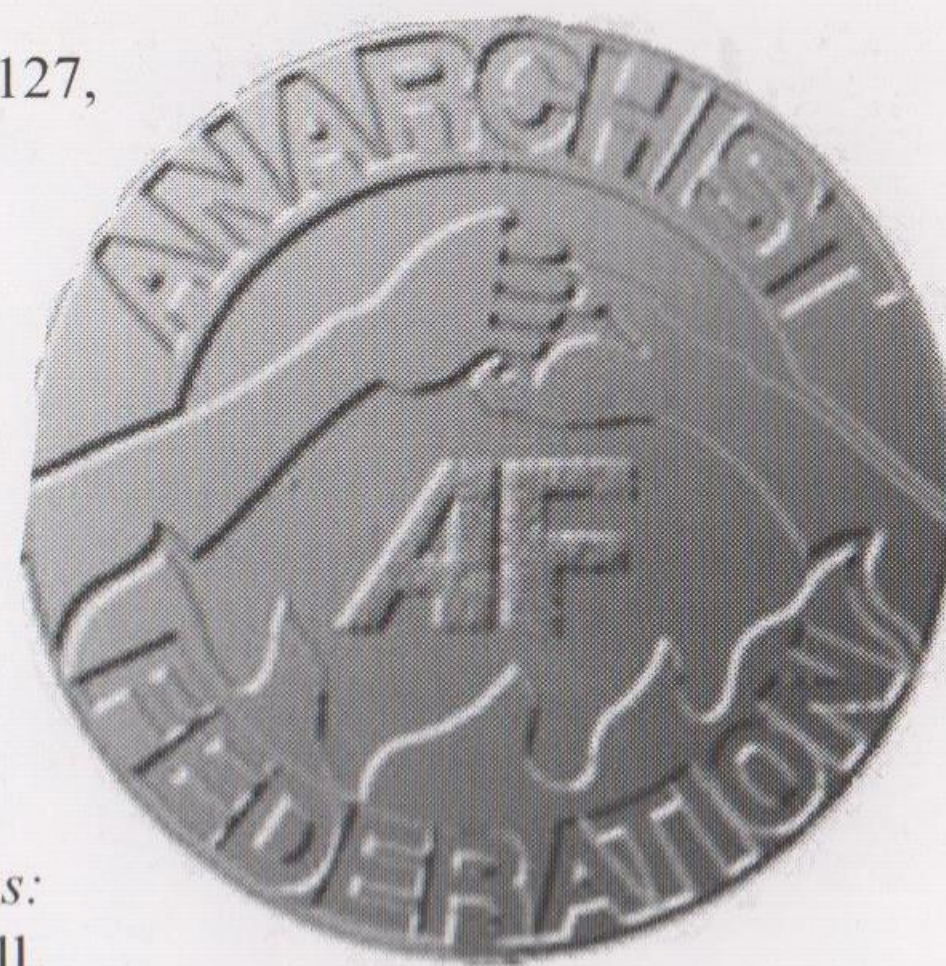
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# Anti-WTO actions — unified against capitalism?

*Here we present two recent articles from the USA about the widely publicised demonstrations which took place in Seattle, Washington State, at the end of November 1999, against its hosting of the World Trade Organisation summit and nominally against globalisation of capitalism in general. These protests were the focus of events that took place around the world, known collectively as N30 in tribute to the earlier J18 international day of action (see last issue of Organise!). Both articles originate from Boston, Massachusetts, hundreds of miles away from Seattle on the East Coast, a fact which in itself helps to highlight the impact that N30 has had across America.*

*The first, a thorough, evocative, but mostly uncritical account of the direct action and confrontations with the police was printed in We Dare Be Free newspaper (#6). Its editors are involved in important developments towards a North Eastern Federation of Anarchist Communists (NEFAC) in the USA and Canada, including the hosting of its founding conference in April this year. The second is an article printed in the first issue of The Bad Days Will End — for council communism/libertarian socialism, and concentrates on a critique of the role and motivations of the labour unions. Read on, and after these articles we'll conclude with a few more words of our own.*

## The battle of Seattle: globalized capitalism and its discontents

FROM ALL REACHES of the globe, countless millions witnessed the dramatic televised broadcasts from the streets of Seattle. For many, the visual imagery that has since come to be associated with the historic meeting of the World Trade Organization has left a lasting impression — the massive protests; the brutal police repression; the burning barricades; the tear gas and rubber bullets; the attacks on corporate property; the riotous clashes; the mass arrests; and of course, the economically prosperous city of Seattle reduced to a declared state of civil emergency... at last the world can truly appreciate the social impact of global capitalism.

After months of organizing and mobilization, it was anyone's guess as to how the resistance to the World Trade Organization (WTO) would manifest itself in the streets of Seattle. When the WTO last met in Geneva over a year ago, the small Swiss city erupted into the worst rioting since 1932 — streets were blocked by spontaneous demonstrations, banks and multinationals were occupied, corporate property was destroyed, cars were overturned and torched, and overall damages were estimated to be in the millions. It seemed highly improbable that effective insurgency on this scale could be translated to a generally passive American left-protest movement — or could it?

In what turned out to be one of the most effective direct action campaigns of the last decade, the disruptive protests in Seattle have managed to give a new breath of radical militancy to a largely co-opted and irrelevant American left. In contrast to the traditionally safe forms of protest commonly used by left-activists (which rely heavily on appealing to the powers that be in order to grant reforms and concessions), the more defiant forms of protests that took

place in Seattle demonstrated a new determination and willingness on the part of certain activists in working towards making this system increasingly more unmanageable for the capitalist ruling class.

Through many levels of complimentary direct action — which included non-violent civil disobedience, riotous clashes with police, militant street occupations, strategic corporate property destruction, and confrontational resistance — activists effectively shut down the WTO's opening ceremonies and first working sessions, took control of the streets of downtown Seattle for over twelve hours, were responsible in part for the total collapse of a new round of neo-liberal trade negotiations, and exposed for all the world to see that capitalist interests are no longer safe, even here, within the confines of the United States. Indeed, history had been made.

### The road to Seattle

Late last winter, the Clinton administration announced to the world that Seattle had been chosen as the host city for the Third Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO), which was scheduled to take place from November 29th through December 3rd. From this publicly announced point of departure, a diverse international coalition of left activists and peoples' movements were quick to take up the task of mounting a successful campaign of opposition to this conference, which was expected to mark the starting point of a new round of negotiations (the so-called 'Millennium Round') aimed at expanding the powers of the WTO. For anarchists and other activists on the radical left, the opposition and resistance to the World Trade Organization was seen, not as a specific and isolated campaign within itself, but



instead as an integral part of the larger struggle against globalized capitalism as a whole. For this reason, the participation from anarchists in organizing against the WTO was significant from the very beginning.

In what was to become a pre-cursor to the global resistance aimed at the WTO, a successful 'international day of action against the global capitalist system' was organized for June 18th (J18) by a decentralized and informal network based around the People's Global Action (PGA). Timed to coincide with the first day of the 'Group of Eight' (G8) Summit held in Cologne, Germany, June 18th saw riots, street parties, direct actions, and creative protests take place in over 40 cities around the globe, with significant confrontations in London, Cologne, Nigeria, Pakistan, New York City, and Eugene, Oregon. From the success of J18, another international day of action was called for November 30th (N30), which was to coincide with the opening ceremonies of the WTO. A strategy of autonomous and decentralized action was adopted by the People's Global Action at the Group's second conference held in Karnataka, India, and this call to action went out to a number of international groups and movements.

In the weeks leading up to the WTO conference, this strategy of autonomous action was beginning to successfully take shape around the world. In late October, it was reported that a Seattle branch-outlet of The GAP (which has been a focus for anti-globalization and anti-sweat shop activism) was the target of a late-night firebombing attempt, where apparently two molotov cocktails were lobbed into the store but did not result in any serious damages.

On November 4th, a total of 11 activists from Northcoast Earth First! were arrested for hanging a banner that read: "Free Trade: Our World For Corporate Profits" from the roof of a building that was hosting an International Conference on Trade, Investment and Tourism in Eureka, CA. That same day, Canadian anti-free trade 'goblins' disrupted a negotiating meeting of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) in Toronto, where stink bombs made from shit and rotting eggs were let off.

On November 15th, Dutch activists from the MayDay action group boarded and occupied a tourist replica of a ship that was owned by the 17th century Dutch East Indian Company (one of the first multinationals), which lies in the harbor of Amsterdam, and hung a giant banner between the masts which read: "Stop The

WTO." In Geneva, 27 Swiss protesters managed to occupy the WTO's world headquarters on November 16th for over two hours before being ejected by police. On November 24th, over 300 people scaled the fence of the World Bank headquarters in India, covering it with posters, graffiti, cow shit and mud.

In Turkey, peasants, environmentalists, and trade unionists marched over 2,000 miles between November 22-29th against the WTO and global capitalism. Similar pre-N30 marches and demonstrations also took place in Korea, Czech Republic, Switzerland, France, India, Canada, and the United States.

### From protest to resistance

Even before the WTO Ministerial Conference officially began, all hell started to break loose as thousands of activists made their way to Seattle days in advance. The Direct Action Network (DAN) had rented a large space in the Capitol Hill district which was to act as a center for anti-WTO activities throughout the week. In this space direct action strategies were planned, workshops and teach-ins were scheduled, affinity groups were formed, legal briefings were given, giant puppets were constructed, and people were trained in non-violent civil disobedience, street theatre, jail solidarity and first aid. A lot of this activity spilled over to a smaller space rented by the Seattle Anarchist Response (SAR), which acted as both an infoshop and meeting space, and the Indy Media Center, where most of the alternative media activism took place.

Within a relatively short time sporadic banner hangings became a commonplace occurrence in Seattle as activists repelled from highway overpasses, buildings, and giant cranes to unfurl bold messages of protest against the WTO. Throughout the city, scattered demonstrations and direct actions also increased dramatically in the days leading up to the WTO conference.

On November 26th, an underground group calling itself the 'Washington Tree Improvement Association' paid a visit to genetic engineering tree research facilities at the University of Washington's College of Urban Horticulture, where over 200 genetically modified trees and saplings were reported to have been destroyed, water lines and hoses were cut, and research materials were sabotaged. On November 27th, activists participated in a Critical Mass ride that managed to enter the Washington Trade and Convention Center en masse, with police frantically trying

clear circling bicyclists from the downstairs foyer.

On Sunday, November 28th, the Direct Action Network (DAN) organized 'a rehearsal for insurrection', which consisted of a large and festive demonstration through the Capitol Hill neighborhood that managed to attract the participation of over 700 people. Later that night, between 50-75 people squatted a 12-unit apartment complex in protest of "a system in which human rights are subordinated to property rights" (after the WTO conference, squatters turned the building over to two homeless-advocacy groups who, through Seattle's Low Income Housing Institute, have attempted to broker a deal with the landlord). Also, 15,000 copies of the *Seattle Post-Intelligence* (a parody on the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, one of the city's largest dailies), with articles mocking the WTO, Monsanto, Boeing, privatization, and neo-liberal trade policies, were meticulously placed in newspaper dispensers all over the city.

By November 29th, activists started to engage in more directly confrontational forms of protest beginning with a demonstration in front of a McDonalds, where Jose Bove, a French goat farmer who has lead a campaign of direct action against the American fast food giant, spoke and shared with the public over 100lb of tariff-free Roquefort cheese that was illegally smuggled into the US. During the demonstration, groups of black-clad anarchists pushed through police lines and lay siege on the McDonalds, and after a few small skirmishes, were successful in smashing in the front windows and covering the exterior with spraypainted graffiti. Other protesters, who were carrying a banner against the genetic engineering of food, jumped on the roof of a city bus. From here, hundreds of protesters moved on to Niketown, where once again militants tried to engage in strategic acts of property destruction. Unfortunately, in what was to set the initial precedence for a week's worth of audacious and downright deplorable actions on the part of reactionary pacifists (who became popularly referred to as 'peace police'), groups of confused peaceniks began to physically defend Niketown, a corporation universally known for its use of sweatshop labor, from being trashed by the anarchists. Pacifism as pathology indeed!

### N30: The day the WTO stood still

In the early morning hours of November 30th, thousands of activists had gathered

simultaneously at both the Victor Steinbrueck Park, near Seattle's waterfront Pike Place Market, and at the Seattle Central Community College, in the Capitol Hill district. In a staged procession, the motley assortment of activists began to march towards the Paramount Theatre, where the opening ceremonies of the WTO conference were set to take place. As hundreds of riot police attempted to prevent the two marches from reaching their perceived destination, participants broke off into large clusters of affinity groups and spread themselves throughout city, occupying every possible street, intersection, and point of entry leading to the Paramount Theatre, and surrounding almost all of the downtown hotels where delegates were staying. Downtown traffic became gridlocked, and hundreds of WTO delegates were successfully pushed back by activist blockades. By mid-morning, it was clear that the strategy of direct action was a complete success. Out of an expected 3,000 delegates, under 350 were able to make it to the Paramount Theatre, and as a result, the WTO officially cancelled its opening ceremonies.

Frustrated by a total loss of control over the situation, heavily equipped riot police (known as 'The Hard Team') began to mount a series of brutal offensives. Police indiscriminately shot canisters of tear gas and rubber bullets into crowds of demonstrators and used pain compliance holds, baton charges and pepper spray (at point blank range) on non-violent activist blockades. Responding accordingly to this violent provocation, groups of anarchists began to exchange volleys of tear gas canisters with police, and participated in a number of defensive scuffles. Whenever possible, small groups of protesters also began counter-offensives by throwing rocks, smoke bombs, and bottles at the lines of advancing riot cops. Make-shift barricades were formed out of overturned dumpsters, tree grates, and newspaper boxes. Police cars attempting to drive through human blockades were chased back, and in some instances, left completely immobile through the use of homemade caltrops. Unattended police

cars, riot vans and delegates' limousines had their tires slashed, windows smashed, and when possible, were overturned by highly mobile groups of anarchist militants.

Rather than successfully regaining control over the streets, the police actions had completely the opposite effect as angered protesters became more confrontational in defending occupied intersections throughout the city. In addition to the unforeseen consequences of their aggressive actions, a huge strategic blunder was also committed by police as they left the entire downtown



area unattended in order to secure positions between the Convention Center (where the WTO was scheduled to begin their first sessions of the afternoon) and the front lines of protest.

At 11:11am, a Reclaim The Streets! party was scheduled to take place in Westlake Center, the center of the city's newly liberated shopping district. Seizing the opportunity, between 60-80 masked anarchists grouped themselves into a highly organized 'black bloc' (an effective tactic adopted from the German autonome) and started on a politically-motivated rampage that spanned the entire downtown

area. Using everything from sledge hammers and crowbars to slingshots and newspaper boxes, the black bloc systematically trashed a number of banks, multinationals, and big businesses. In choosing clear targets such as Bank of America, US Bancorp, Fidelity Investment, The Gap, McDonalds, Old Navy, Banana Republic, and Niketown, anarchists were successful in making a direct assault against some of the specific multi-national capitalist interests who stand to benefit most from institutions such as the WTO. Before long, huge stretches of windows were splintered into shards and buildings were covered with anarchist and anti-capitalist graffiti.

As the entire downtown area was transformed into a festive warzone of urban disorder, property destruction, clouds of tear gas, spontaneous street parties, and riotous clashes between protesters and police, the 50,000 strong labor march made its way through the city. Unfortunately, by and large, the rank-and-file of organized labor proved themselves unwilling to break from the timid and reformist union leadership of the AFL-CIO in order to stand with protesters against the violent police advancements. However, as the main labor march pushed on, an IWW contingent (marching under a banner which read "Capitalism Can Not Be Reformed!") pushed its way through the AFL marshalls and joined the blockades. This act of solidarity also managed to open the way for groups of rebellious steelworkers, electrical workers, long-shoremen, sheet metal workers and teamsters who also joined

with activists as they struggled to keep control of the streets.

In addition to the large AFL-sponsored labor march, a sizeable contingent from the Peoples Assembly, initiated by the Filipino group Bayan-USA, also marched into the scene. The Peoples Assembly had been meeting for two days with delegates from many different nations in order to expose imperialist globalization and develop solidarity between their various struggles. At the front of the march were Korean drummers, followed by contingents from the Philippines, Filipino communities throughout North America, and representatives



from Africa, Japan and Latin America.

By mid-afternoon, there were a number of tense stand-offs and running battles with police, who, in addition to tear gas and rubber bullets, began to employ the use of concussion grenades and large wooden and plastic bullets against crowds of people. In response, barricades were reinforced and a few overturned dumpsters were set aflame.

At around 4:30pm, black bloc anarchists managed to regroup in front of Niketown. After the windows were successfully smashed in, a number of local city youths entered the building and helped themselves to some of the overpriced merchandise. As with many of the other instances of direct action against corporate



property, groups of 'peace police' started to physically assault both black bloc anarchists and young looters. Forming a defensive circle around the battered Niketown, supposedly 'non-violent' activists shoved and tackled militants, and in some cases attempted to restrain people with the intent of turning them over to police, all in an effort to safe-guard the exploitive multinational from further destruction and expropriation. This was one of at least six different occasions where self described 'peacekeepers' attacked individuals engaging in direct action against corporate property throughout the day.

By early nightfall, a civil state of emergency was declared (for the first time in Seattle since World War II) and a curfew imposed. Police launched a massive tear-gas attack and series of violent charges against the remaining groups of demonstrators, forcing most people from the downtown area and up into the Capitol Hill district. As helicopter spotlights circled overhead, police fought pitched battles against hundreds of protesters and angry residents in what became some of the worst confrontations of the day. Volleys of tear-

gas canisters were thrown back at advancing lines of police (who were also attacked with rocks and bottles), intersections were barricaded with burning dumpsters, and a local Starbucks was thoroughly gutted. The battle raged on late into the night.

Official reports claimed that 68 people had been arrested throughout the day, the number of injuries were estimated to be in the hundreds (most went unreported), and over \$3 million in property damages had been sustained (with at least a further \$10 million in lost Christmas shopping revenues throughout the week). By the week's end, Seattle's final costs for its handling of the WTO conference would exceed \$9 million, far surpassing worst-case projections.

### The Empire Strikes Back

With President Clinton arriving in Seattle on December 1st to address the WTO, city officials (under pressure from federal authorities) had extended the state of emergency, and the greater downtown area was declared a 'no-protest zone' for the remainder of the week. By early Wednesday morning, Seattle resembled a city under military occupation, with hundreds of National Guard troops ordered in by the governor, riot police and state troopers assigned to every corner, and armored vehicles making routine patrols throughout downtown. Thousands had gathered downtown in defiance of the no-protest zone, resulting in mass arrests by police. Protest organizers, medics, alternative media, and people with radio communications were all specifically targeted by police, while many others were placed under arrest for 'unlawful assembly', or else simply for possessing gas masks (which was declared illegal due to the civil emergency) or visible displays of protest such as signs, banners, stickers, or even buttons.

For the hundreds of arrested protesters, a special mass incarceration center was set up at the Sand Point Navy Base by police. Three busloads of arrestees managed to cut their plastic handcuffs with finger nail-clippers and refused to leave the buses in which they were transported in, resulting in a 14-hour occupation which came to an end only after police pepper sprayed and physically removed the occupants. There have been numerous reports of systematic police torture used against arrestees within both the Sand Point Navy Base and King County Jail. It has been reported that non-compliant individuals were beaten repeatedly, slammed against walls, overcrowded in cells, threatened at gunpoint, stripped naked, hog-tied and thrown into isolation,

threatened with rape and torture, carried by their hair, and strapped into four-point restraint chairs where they were pepper sprayed and had pain-compliance techniques applied. Broken bones, concussions and other serious injuries were purposely left untreated and most people were denied access to legal representation. Despite this sadistic and brutal treatment by police, arrested protesters maintained a disciplined strategy of jail solidarity and engaged in numerous acts of resistance and non-compliance with legal proceedings.

Later in the afternoon, over a thousand people marched in solidarity with locked-out steelworkers to Pier 63 for a waterfront rally. After listening to numerous speeches, hundreds of restless protesters started chanting "Downtown! Downtown!" and marched en masse towards the convention center in defiance of the declared no-protest zone. In response, riot police and National Guard troops blocked all streets leading downtown. With street access to the convention center effectively cut off, protesters instead changed strategies and began to occupy key intersections in an effort to tie-up rush hour traffic. Without warning, a massive police offensive began as numerous police cars and armored personnel carriers began arriving on the scene and riot police and National Guard moved in. In a heavy-handed attempt to disperse this 'unlawful assembly', whole city blocks were completely engulfed by clouds of tear-gas, while police indiscriminately shot rubber and plastic bullets and dozens of concussion grenades into the crowds of demonstrators and by-standers. As people fled down alleyways and re-grouped in Pike Place Market, riot police and National Guard followed close behind. Once again the volley of tear gas and concussion grenades were thrown into crowds of people, this time in Seattle's historic open marketplace (and reportedly with a stronger gas that contained an apparent nerve agent responsible for a number of seizures, spontaneous menstruation and blackouts amongst protesters). From here most people retreated and made their way back up to the Capitol Hill district, touching off another night of fierce clashes with police. In total, it was reported that 510 people had been arrested on this day (with injuries assumed to be even greater than the previous day).

### We won, you bastards!

Thursday morning began in front of Seattle Central Community College, where the Direct Action Network had scheduled a

public meeting and press conference to expose and denounce the brutal police actions used against activists and residents throughout the week. From here over 2,000 people marched throughout the city in protest of the continued police state in Seattle. Due to the widespread anger at the police brutality, the city backed off with some of their more overt police attacks, however the state of emergency and night curfew remained in place. In an effort to shift attention from their own brutal actions, authorities announced that they were conducting a city-wide manhunt for anarchists who may have participated in Tuesday's spree of property destruction, targeting anyone dressed in black with black masks. For the remainder of the demonstrations and marches, groups of identifiable anarchists were continually singled out and closely monitored by police and federal authorities.

By noon, the anti-police brutality march met up with an equally large march in support of independent farmers (and against biotechnology and monopoly agribusiness supported by the WTO) in Victor Steinbrueck Park, where the farmers' groups had scheduled an outdoor news conference and rally. From here, the farmers march continued on to protest in front of the

Seattle headquarters of Cargill (a leading global agribusiness monopoly) and anti-police brutality demonstrators made their way to the King County Jail, where many arrested protesters were still being held. Hundreds of people surrounded the jail, mounting a 24-hour blockade in solidarity with the arrested. In response, a King County judge ruled that police had eight hours to allow for all of the arrested to have access to legal representation, have those held in solitary moved back into the general population, and provide adequate medical attention for people in need.

On Friday, a labor march with over 10,000 participants made their way through the downtown area to demonstrate against the no-protest zone and assert their right to free assembly. At about the same time, hundreds of people gathered in front of the Westin Hotel in support of a group of activists who managed to lock themselves to the hotel's entrance in an attempt to block WTO delegates from attending the final meeting of trade talks. Towards evening, when the curfew was set to take effect, groups of protesters occupied positions inside of the no-protest zone with dozens of riot police surrounding them.

Late into the night, hours after the WTO conference was officially scheduled to end,

it was announced to the world that the WTO meetings had reached an impasse, trade talks had completely collapsed, and the conference ended in total confusion and disorder. With no agenda decided (Caribbean, Latin American and African delegations all refused their consent on grounds of the secretive and undemocratic nature of WTO process) and negotiations suspended, there will be no 'Millennium Round' of neo-liberal trade agreements put into motion within the WTO. As the final session adjourned, exhausted WTO delegates stated that they would try again next year in Geneva to bridge the large differences within the organization.

After the week's trade conference fizzled to a close (with little to celebrate, the official closing ceremonies were cancelled), most delegates could not wait to leave Seattle. As they made their way through downtown, they were met one last time by activists who displayed a large signboard which read: "Bye WTO, It's Been A Riot!".

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## Seattle: The US riot against 'Globalization'? by Loren Goldner

MASS POLITICS in the streets disappeared in the US between 1970 and 1973. In retrospect, it is clear that the years 1964 to 1970 were not a 'pre-revolutionary situation', but anyone who lived through those years as an activist can be forgiven for thinking it was. Any number of people in the ruling circles shared the same error of judgment. The black urban insurrections of 1964 to 1968, the working-class wildcat rebellion (often led by black workers) from 1966 to 1973, the breakdown of the US military in Indochina, the 'student' and 'youth' rebellions, and the appearance of militant feminist, gay and ecology movements were all indicators of a major social earthquake. Thirty years after they ended, the 'sixties', for the left and for the right, still hang over American society like smoke after a conflagration.

The 'oil crisis' and world recession of 1973-75 closed that era, and the revolu-

tionary movement in the US and everywhere else has been retrenching and regrouping ever since. If the ebb has seemed deeper in the US than in Europe, it is only because US capital is the cutting edge of the dismantling of the old Keynesian 'social contract', such as it was, a dismantling in which Europe is still at the halfway point. The ebb of open struggle in the US, punctuated briefly but hardly reversed by actions against the Gulf War in 1990-91 or by the Los Angeles riots of 1992, expresses a vast 'recomposition' of class lines in a world restructuring of capital. Many formerly successful forms of struggle, most notably the wildcat strike, have all but disappeared. The movements of the sixties were internationalist in sentiment, but they rarely transcended the national framework in practice. However much one wants to quibble about the reality of 'globalization', it has been clear for a

long time, even to avowed reformists, that any meaningful strategy, even in the day-to-day sense, has to be international, or better, 'transnational', from the outset to win anything worth talking about. "Think globally, act locally" may sound like a solution, but its practical result usually comes down to rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic.

Some American and Chinese workers may have had a more radical consciousness, and perhaps were even more internationalist rhetorically, in the 1920s than today, but today conditions exist in which they are compelled, practically, to make internationalism concrete in a way that was unthinkable in the 1920s. Awareness of the need for a global strategy has been around, and widespread, for a long time, but it has been extremely difficult to make practical. The reformists at places such as the Institute for Policy Studies, supported by a few capitalists, are working hard to



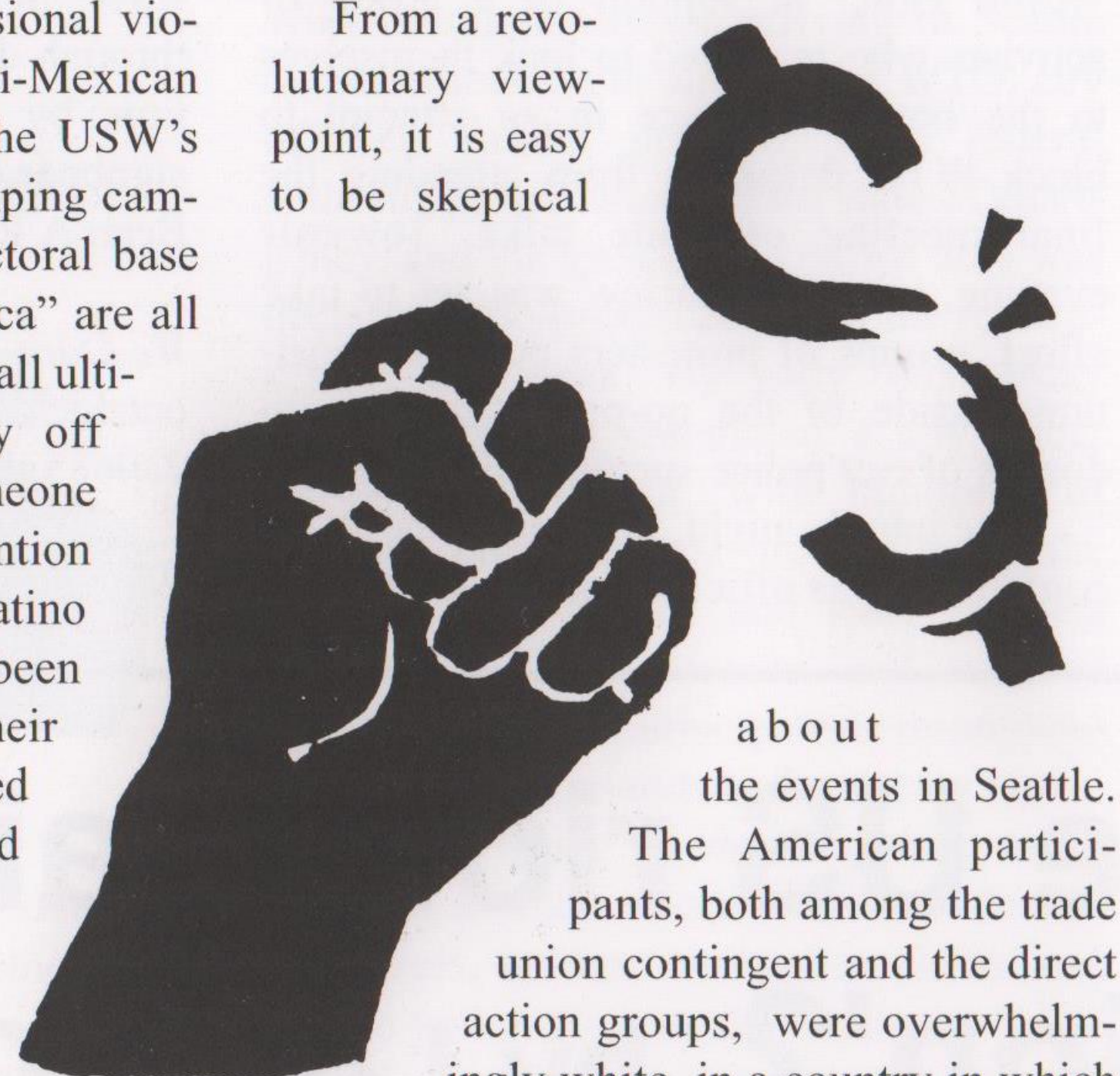
develop something like a 'global Keynesianism' and a 'global welfare state', once they solve the little problem of the 'separate body of armed men', the sovereign nation state, which has not exactly disappeared. Meanwhile, the 'centrist' Clinton administration has since 1993 pushed through NAFTA, the WTO, the ASEAN agreement, and the dismantling of welfare, a set of attacks on working people in America that would have been opposed in the streets if undertaken by the 'right'. It has delivered everything the globalists have asked for.

American workers have reacted to this situation in contradictory ways. There has been an important protectionist sentiment among American workers for a long time: "Buy American", "Save American Jobs", "Park Your Toyota in Tokyo", support for anti-immigrant legislation, occasional violence against Asians, the vile anti-Mexican propaganda of the Teamsters, the USW's (United Steel Workers) anti-dumping campaign, or the working-class electoral base for Buchanan's "Fortress America" are all ugly examples of this. Beyond it all ultimately lies the sentiment: lay off someone else, or don't hire someone else, and save my job, not to mention a fair dose of anti-Asian, anti-Latino racism. Many workers have been won over to sympathy for their employers, who are beleaguered by imports, and have swallowed big concessions on that basis. On the other hand, traditional unions such as the UAW (United Auto Workers) as well as 'respectable' reformist opposition groups such as Labor Notes have made some serious attempts to hook up with workers (usually along industry lines) in Mexico, Asia and Europe, but strictly within a union and often corporatist framework. There have been some coordinated job actions in auto between the US and Mexico, or the Bridgestone-Firestone campaign of US and Japanese workers. But all these actions have been strictly under the control of some faction of union bureaucrats, in or out of power, and represent the extension of sectoral trade union reformism to a world scale.

There exists an inchoate desire in the US, including among some American workers, (which surfaced during the campaigns against NAFTA or 1995 'fast track' legislation), for a DIFFERENT KIND OF INTERNATIONALISM than that offered by either the globalist ruling class or by the timid actions of official unionists who unquestioningly accept the framework of capitalism. If, as

seems to be the case, the world economy has become a 'negative sum game' for workers, a 'race to the bottom', then a 'different kind of internationalism' would mean creating a situation for a 'positive sum game' in which workers can concretely fight for their own interests on a CLASS FOR ITSELF basis, in a way that implicitly or, better still, explicitly, recognizes the practical unity of interests of working people in the US and China, Japan and Bangladesh, Italy and Albania. Since society, like nature, abhors a vacuum, without this kind of perspective, the protectionists and/or the anti-protectionist, internationalist reformists will rush in, and contribute to a new anti-working class reshuffling of the deck, in the capitalist "sum which can never be a totality", as Bordiga used to say.

From a revolutionary viewpoint, it is easy to be skeptical



The American participants, both among the trade union contingent and the direct action groups, were overwhelmingly white, in a country in which 30% of the population is now constituted by people of color. The slogan "Fair Trade, Not Free Trade" could certainly be seen as a slightly-concealed variant of protectionism by those (and there were many) who wished to do so. The dominant nerve of the demonstrators was activated by the very real prospect of little groups of transnational corporate appointees overruling and overturning national labor and environmental laws and agreements, but just behind that animus was, for some, the idea of Chinese bureaucrats having such influence. Steel workers threw foreign steel into Seattle harbor and others held a 'Seattle Tea Party' against foreign imports, with China the obvious main target. Few questioned as vociferously the negative impact of WTO entry on CHINESE workers, who obviously could not be present.

Throughout, the trade union bureaucracy remained firmly in control of the worker contingents, (determined, and suc-

cessful, in their plan to have nothing but a peaceful, disciplined, unthreatening march independent of, if not indifferent to, the 'crazies' of the direct action groups), and few if any workers seriously challenged that control. The animus of the Sweeney leadership of the AFL-CIO clearly came from the sense of 'betrayal' at the recent US-China agreement on China's entry into the WTO. The failure of the Seattle meeting took the Democrats off the hook of having to push hard for China's entry into the WTO in an election year, when both the USW and the Teamsters have clearly gone for the protectionist option. Clinton's kind words for the rights of the demonstrators should be seen in that context, particularly after it became known that powerful forces at the top had pushed for heavy repression when the police lost control on the first day, and that US Army intelligence units disguised as demonstrators had been all over the place with concealed lapel cameras and all the new paraphernalia of the technotronic, 'New Paradigm' surveillance state. In the Boston area, where I live, much of the 'post-Seattle' organizing has an even more overtly protectionist agenda, with repugnant slogans such as "Not One More American Job to Mexico", and I doubt that this is exceptional.

Nevertheless, despite all the elements of 'uneven', parochial or simply reactionary ('Buchananite') consciousness it may have contained, one has to characterize Seattle as a breakthrough. There was, in the patent lack of official preparedness for what happened, an unrepeatable singularity (no international trade summit will ever again take place, anywhere, with so little readiness for heavy repression) an opening to exactly that element of the unknown and unexpected that characterizes a situation momentarily beyond all manipulative control, whether by the state or the unions or the 'left', when power lies for a moment 'in the streets'. In 24 hours, Seattle ripped away the 'one note' unanimity of the tolerated 'public discussion' of international economic issues of the past 20 years or more. Millions of people who never heard of the WTO learned what it was, and what it does, more thoroughly than through decades of peaceful opposition and think-tank chatter. Even strongly protectionist American workers were thrown together in the streets with activists, including worker activists, from 100 countries, and had to confront the human face of the producers of 'foreign imports' in a way that had never previously occurred on such a scale, not to mention in such an open situation (as opposed to tedious international trade

union conferences of bureaucratic delegations). Teamsters, bare-breasted Amazon lesbian warriors and tree-huggers were thrown together, and talked, on an unprecedented (for the US) scale. The Seattle events gave a concrete target to opponents of the seemingly abstract forces that have made serious action on the appropriate level so difficult for so long. In accounts I heard from people who had been there, and in material I was able to gather, there was a genuine whiff of the spontaneous awakening, in the heat of confrontation, to the power of capital and the state that has not been seen in the US since the sixties, a genuine demonstration by masses in motion of the truth of the Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach, to wit that classical materialism "does not understand sensuous activity as objective". The great majority of demonstrators in Seattle, particularly in the direct action contingents, had not been born or were children when the sixties ended, and had never experienced their own power in the streets in this way, anywhere. Trite as it may sound to the small numbers of sixties activists who still consider themselves revolutionaries, and who are jaded from having been through it all before, a first clubbing, a first tear-gassing, seeing the police go berserk against people detained in a holding cell, a first concrete experience of what bourgeois 'rights' really mean when the state tears them up in a confrontational setting, is an irreversible crossing of a threshold, an irreplaceable experience of collective power and of the role of those who job is to repress it. People who go through this, whatever the consciousness or intentions that brought them to Seattle, can never be the same.

The brief, ephemeral opening of the sense that 'nothing will ever be the same' experienced by some in Seattle and in the wake of Seattle will close again quickly (just as the opening, such as it was, of the LA riots, or that of the December 1995 strike wave in France, closed quickly) without a strategy for a real internationalism, an internationalism in which criticisms of slave labor in China or child labor in India are joined to, eg a practical critique of the mushroom-like proliferation of sweatshops and prison labor in the USA perspective encompassing the most oppressed layers of the working class and its allies is always a safeguard against the parochialism, including militant parochialism, which sets the stage for a 'reformist' reshuffling of the capitalist deck, as occurred in the 1930s and 1940s. Ever since '1973' closed the era of meaningful 'wildcat' direct action on the shop floor of one factory, the workers' movement in the US and many other countries has been groping toward a new concrete terrain on which to fight something beside endless losing local battles against plant closings and downsizing, or outright reactionary battles demanding in effect that the layoffs happen 'somewhere else'. In their greatly heightened global mobility, the capitalists stole a march on the world working class that more than 25 years of losing and defensive struggles has not yet overcome. If Seattle is in fact to be a positive turning point, at which history did in fact finally turn, it can only be on the path to solidifying and greatly expanding this terrain.



*The Bad Days Will End* (four-issue sub. \$5, \$10 outside of US) is available from: Merrymount Publications, P.O. Box 441597, West Somerville, MA, 02144. Email: [bronterre@earthlink.com](mailto:bronterre@earthlink.com)

## Conclusions by the AF

THE FIRST ARTICLE does an important job in defending direct action against police and property at N30. Its author and numerous other anarchist communists, notably those around the NEFAC initiative, are united in support of members of the 'anarchist black bloc' who are facing serious charges, and who are being scapegoated by some liberal elements. However, it seems clear that many of the other so-called anti-capitalists at Seattle do not have a class struggle, anti-state agenda. One problem with an uncritical attitude to 'people's global this and that' is exactly its acceptance of cross-class unity in struggle, which has to be opposed if we are to recognise the true nature of capitalism, being based as it is on class privilege and ownership. A class analysis also puts direct action into context. It defends actions against the police and property but it can also be used to criticise autonomous actions if they become too divorced from the experiences of other working class people – as a guard against a tendency towards elitism, and ultimately terrorism. The blank acceptance of the fire-bombing incident is worrying in this respect. On the other hand, can anarchist communists really talk positively about breathing a new militancy into the left? Maybe we use the word 'left' differently in Britain compared to the USA, but anarchists really do need to be careful about identifying with non-libertarians. Since J18 and N30, the Socialist Workers' Party here in Britain is trying to benefit by jumping on the anti-capitalism bandwagon (being careful not to mention the word anarchist of course), and promoting the party's leadership as the way forward. Quite probably this will fall on deaf ears, and we won't have to work too hard to stop them getting their democratic-centralist clutches into those who are unaware of their kind of politics, but any talk of the left in a positive light can only help them confuse our huge differences in objectives. On the contrary we should be pleased if they remained weak.

It is perhaps easier to criticise from outside, but the author of the second article doesn't hide this fact. With a more detached analysis they do well to show how so-called anti-capitalist unity can be read in different ways, not least as the veiled (and not so veiled) protectionism of the unions and the Fair Trade lobby. So, whilst it is good to know that some in the worker contingents have openly supported the direct actions of N30 and have not been taken in by liberal pacifist condemnations, we find it equally important to recognise the lack of a break from conventional leftist organisation. It is always most valuable when workers learn from struggling outside of their unions, and it is not clear to what extent this happened at Seattle, if at all. We must hope that workers involved in N30 will recognise how unions will defend jobs 'at home' in the guise of penalising companies with poor workers rights abroad (with the support of the US President, no less), which is against any true internationalism. This would be on the way to an understanding of why a national or state economy is not a benign alternative to the seemingly more anti-state 'globalised' variety, and that we need to fight instead for the real alternative of an anti-state communism – anarchist communism.



# Debacle in Timor

AFTER 24 YEARS the world's media finally discovered East Timor. The first glimpses they provided were those ten-minute, end of broadcast time fillers, showing us how the UN was bringing democracy to yet another uncivilised corner of the world. Then, as the situation disintegrated, 'our' fearless journalists fled to watch events from the cosy safety of the aggressor's lair, and danced to a merry tune fiddled by the impartial western governments. In the end they just got bored and left for their next news-byte; Timor forgotten once more!

It's easy to be cynical about Timor; it really is. But what of the lessons that can be drawn? And what now for the people of East Timor?

## The vote

August 30th was billed as the day East Timor got to vote on its freedom, no less. Well, not quite. Actually the referendum

was to decide whether East Timor would become an autonomous region of Indonesia. A 'no' vote was regarded as signalling a demand for independence.

However, this still had to be ratified by Indonesia's People's Consultative Assembly (MPR), effectively meaning that in the end the Indonesian government got to decide on East Timor's independence. In two weeks of TV coverage in Britain this 'minor' fact was completely overlooked (coincidentally it took 'our' illustrious journalists nearly this length of time to pronounce the Timorese leader's name correctly! Most never figured it out).

In these long reports prior to the referendum, minor mention was made of the spectre of the militias. Yet to the people of Timor they were already well known; the violence was well underway. So how come the UN didn't foresee the coming events?

President Habibie announced in the January that there was to be a referendum on the future of East Timor. It seems that

this was a sop to the international community to prove the government's democratic credentials in the wake of the fall of Suharto. Allied to this, following the 1997 Asian economic meltdown – brought on in no small part by Western currency speculation – Indonesian capitalists were desperate for Western finance to prop up their battered economy (an irony that should not be passed over!). Timor was an easy response, having been just about kept on the agenda by a small number of dedicated people around the world, and most importantly by the sheer tenacity of the Timorese themselves never to give up their struggle.

It is unlikely that anyone within the Indonesian government seriously thought East Timor would be lost, and, just to make sure, steps were taken to ensure that results would be favourable. As the referendum was announced the military set up the militias across the 13 districts (Kabupaten). They were trained in West Timor by groups 4 and 5 of Kopassus – Indonesia's elite forces, who have received training from KST (Dutch), SAS (UK), Green Berets (USA), GSG-9 (Germany), amongst others. They were 11,000 strong drawn almost exclusively from outside of Timor (another favourite government tactic), including criminal gangs released from prisons across the archipelago specifically for the job.

That same January, Operasi Sapu Jagad-I (Operation Universal Sweep) was commenced by the military. This was intended to target the leaders of the CNRT – the umbrella organisation of pro-independence groups, and other notable figures with a campaign of violence and intimidation aimed at frightening the populace into accepting autonomy. The military figured that months of violence would intimidate people sufficiently to deter them from registering and voting. It would show the world that the referendum was unnecessary and that the people supported autonomy. Clearly, after 24 years of occupation, the military hadn't learnt much about their adversaries.

The United Nations Assistance Mission in East Timor (UNAMET) arrived in the East Timorese capital, Dili, in May to oversee the referendum. UNAMET had 270 civilian police, unarmed and serving no real purpose. The UN meekly put security for the referendum in the hands of the

Indonesian security forces. A less impartial force would have been impossible to find.

Since the referendum there has been much finger pointing as to who was to blame for the disastrous occurrences; yet the question is not how the referendum was run, but why? It may have escaped the notice of the UN but East Timor was invaded! How can they possibly justify subjecting a population to further torment for the sake of a vote? Is this their idea of international law? Clearly it is, since they are repeating exactly the same farce in a number of other territories around the world – Western Sahara is just one example. Apparently, what democracy equates to is that powerful countries can freely invade weaker neighbours, put their lands to the torch, their people to the sword, asset strip the place, and then decades down the line the UN will turn up to ask what's left of the population if they're happy with the situation, while their would be killers poke the barrel of a gun in their face!

Of course, the world media never asked the question; too busy sipping cocktails with the generals in Jakarta no doubt. Politicians around the world were quietly complicit in this too, you might even think that they had something to hide. Well, no surprises, of course they do.

## Invasion and resistance

Following the overthrow of the Salazar regime in Portugal in 1974, by the MFA (Movement of the Armed Forces), the leftist government pulled their bankrupt nation out of their colonies. The revolution had been given much impetus by the colonial wars they were fighting in their African colonies. Marxist governments were established in Angola (MPLA), Mozambique (FRELIMO), Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde (PAIGC) as they declared independence.

In East Timor too, independence was granted, though without the same enthusiasm. There was hardly any governing infrastructure, and nobody to do the governing. The Portuguese were asked to stay on until a stable government could be established. FRETILIN, the Timorese independence front, was only founded in 1974. It naturally sought contact with the other Portuguese speaking independence movements, for help and solidarity. To give them any sort of ideology is probably to overstate the case. However, they'd now committed the ultimate heresy.

December 7, 1975, a lone radio message was broadcast: "The soldiers are killing indiscriminately. Women and children are

being shot in the streets. This is an appeal for international help. This is an SOS... Please help us." Not only did nobody help, but unbeknown to the Timorese the invasion had been delayed by two days to allow US president Ford and Secretary of State Kissinger to fly the hell out of Jakarta where they'd been rubber-stamping the invasion, so as to avoid appearing complicit. As if?? What they clearly didn't realise is that shit sticks... and it stinks too!

The mighty UsoFA was seemingly so shit scared of 600,000 mostly peasants, and the potential of them becoming a bastion of Marxism, that it wanted them obliterated; and in the wake of their somewhat disappointing performance in Vietnam they didn't want the blood on their hands.

In the ensuing bloodbath tens of thousands were butchered as the country was put to the torch. As a result, 1976 saw the formation of FALINTIL to wage guerrilla warfare against the invaders. Portugal had protested the invasion, as the democratic countries of the world buried their heads in the sand, but they had been powerless to do anything – except watch. The guerrilla war was waged with surprising success considering FALINTIL's total lack of resources or experience. Nobody was more surprised than the Indonesian government and military! In 1992, their leader and figurehead Jose 'Xanana' Gusmao was captured and jailed.

By 1994 reports were suggesting that at least 200,000 had been killed, a third of the population! Proportionally, this exceeds every notable mass murderer of the 20th century, yet Suharto has never been committed to that hall of infamy. The UN has become very fond of using the word 'genocide' mostly for effect rather than accuracy, yet here surely is a clear-cut case of attempted genocide. According to them, apparently not. But what else is causing deliberate starvation to an entire people? KOPASSUS maintained a no-prisoner policy: capture them, torture them, and kill them. Gusmao was lucky, even the generals weren't stupid enough to kill him for fear of finally pricking the democrats' consciences around the world. Many of his operatives were not so lucky.

## International complicity

Western capital sees Indonesia as a prize. It's the fourth most populous nation with 200 million people, 115 million of which are on Java. From the birth of the republic, which in reality is little more than a Javanese empire, it pursued aggressive land grabbing. President Sukarno, who wound

## What goes in Organise!

*Organise!* hopes to open up debate in many areas of life. As we have stated before, unless signed by the Anarchist Federation as a whole or by a local AF group articles in *Organise!* reflect the views of the person who has signed the article and no one else.

In this issue we have published two articles from North America on Seattle with editorial comment. *Organise!* is not a rigid 'party-line' magazine and we hope we can use *Organise!* as a forum for the revolutionary anarchist/libertarian movement in general. Please submit any articles, reviews, letters etc to us at the London address.

up a crazed megalomaniac, was ultimately doomed for committing the cardinal sin of consorting with the PKI (Indonesian Communist Party; then one of the world's largest), in his quest for power. During the Konfrontasi, Britain and other Commonwealth countries had to send troops in to the jungles of Borneo to prevent him from seizing the entire island. Sarawak and Sabah had opted to join the new Malaysian federation, while Brunei had opted for independence. Indonesia also landed troops in Peninsular Malaysia, and even Singapore.

Sukarno was unreliable, so the western powers welcomed the arrival of Suharto and the New Order, as he was avowedly anti-Soviet. Following his success in an orchestrated move in 1965, which saw a number of Suharto's rivals killed, the PKI was banned. And then it was eliminated, the party machinery taking advantage of muslim groups to carry out the slaughter. In the carnage that followed, the government claimed 160,000 dead as "a fair figure". Most other observers start the bidding at 500,000, and many claim well in excess of a million. Sumatra, the island with the reputation for being the most left-leaning and rebellious (it is also, in terms of population the only island that can mount any kind of challenge to Javanese domination) suffered particularly badly. It wasn't only the PKI who were exterminated; it was union members, political activists, and no small number who died merely as a result of opportunities being taken to settle old disputes and vendettas.





In 1969 Suharto did a dirty deal with the Dutch government while the world's governments again went sand-digging with their faces, and annexed West Papua, which became the 26th province – Irian Jaya. Interestingly the UN pops up here. Despite years of Indonesian infiltration the population showed no interest in becoming part of their republic, so having done the deal, up pops the UN with the required sop that the Papuans should decide upon independence – or Indonesian province – by the end of 1969. The 'Act of Free Choice' took place in July, supervised by the UN. This amounted to Indonesia announcing that the elders of the three most populous districts had unanimously decided to become a part of Indonesia. The abandonment of the West Papuans is yet another sad and disgusting story, still being played out.

Western capital has poured into Indonesia. Companies such as Nike and Adidas have set up huge sweatshops paying workers (many of whom are children) a pittance to work in appalling conditions for long hours, with no rights, no worker organisation tolerated, so they can glean even higher profits from their over-priced rubbish in the world's rich countries. Land has been denuded, as forests have been clear-cut for profit; Kalimantan, it is claimed, now has no untouched primary forest! The large smoke clouds, which choked much of South-East Asia in 1997, in the process devastating Malaysia's tourist industry, were largely caused by forest burning in Indonesia. The arms trade to Indonesia has been well documented. Britain is their biggest supplier. It has provided training, weapons, instruments of torture and crowd suppression equipment. They are not alone.

In 1994, in opposition, Robin Cook stated that Hawk aircraft had been "observed on bombing runs in East Timor in most years since 1984". Once in government he denied having ever said such a thing (ever heard of *Hansard* you fuckwit!), and that Hawks were not operational in East Timor.

So, as we can see international complicity in the whole dirty business of East Timor and Indonesian politics is nothing new. In fact, quite often they have been doing nothing more than supporting Western hegemony. Politicians in the developed world have absolutely no grounds for adopting their positions of moral superiority, which they relish so much. The UN-backed referendum was a chance seemingly for everyone

to come out smelling of roses, particularly for those who understood absolutely nothing about what has taken place in East Timor for the past 24 years.

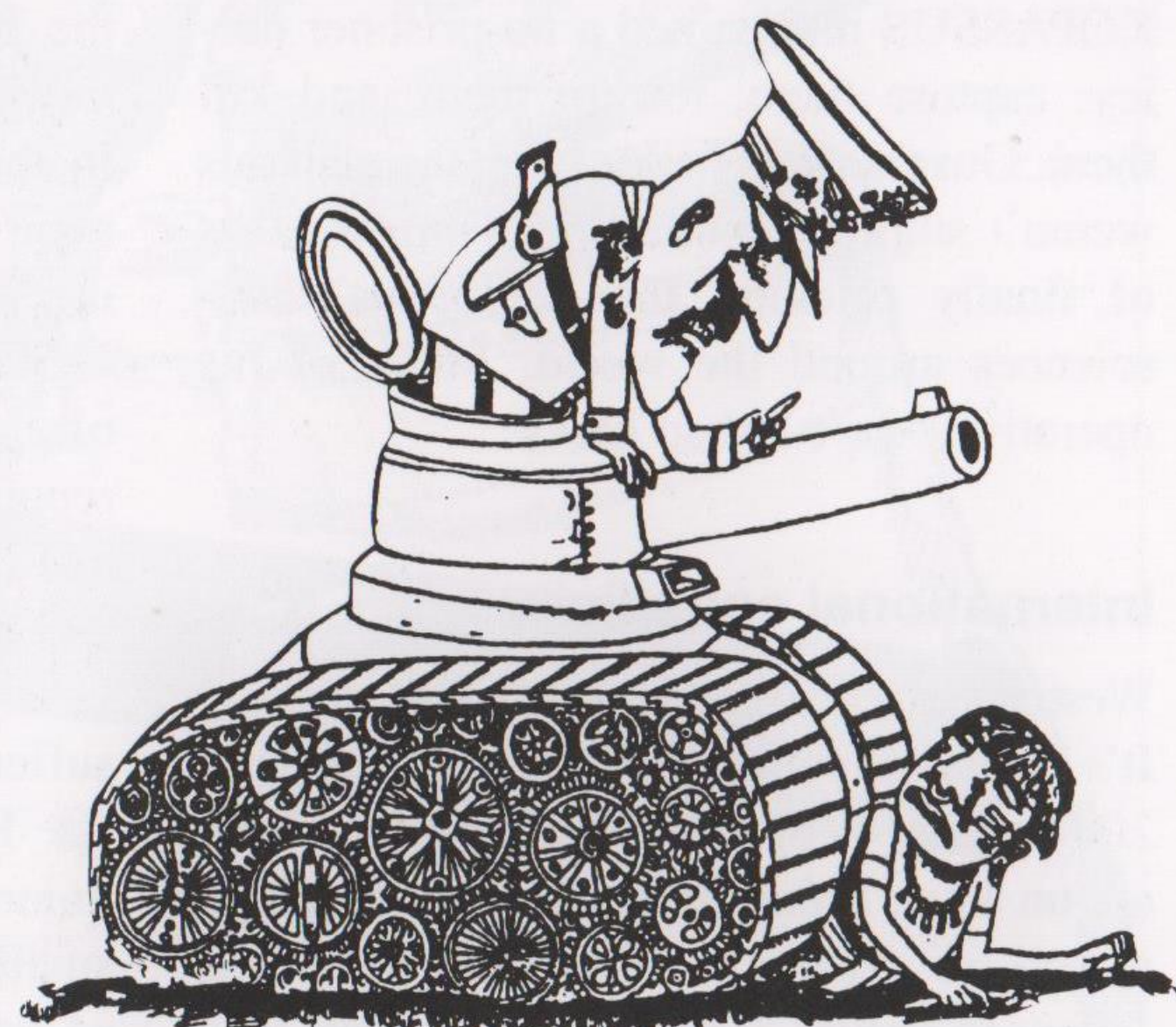
### Indonesian revenge

Operasi Sapu Jagad-I was a resounding failure. The people of East Timor had spent 24 years suffering Indonesian state violence – what difference was one more year going to make? Of a near-total turnout, 78.5% voted 'NO' (not yes, media please note!), in an unprecedented show of faith in the UN, who had promised protection. It was a show of faith they surely didn't deserve. Of course, when people have their backs to the wall they'll cling to anything, and the UN are notorious for talking big, so it's maybe not so surprising. It was just another example in a long line of acts of mass defiance.

The very fact that the military had launched a wave of intimidation clearly illustrated that they didn't want the referendum to go ahead – probably reason enough for most East Timorese to therefore support it. The media played heavily on this image of the UN as the benevolent bringer of democracy, and the Timorese as the grateful recipients. Possibly closer to the truth is that most expected little or nothing from the UN (after all they'd done absolutely nothing for the previous 24 years), but saw the vote as an act of resistance to Indonesian rule.

And then all hell broke loose!

Even before the votes were counted it must have been obvious to the military that they'd made a monumental error of judgement. They'd utterly failed to intimidate people from voting and knew full well they'd be demolished in the count. Operasi Sapu Jagad-II was thus initiated. This was also pre-planned, and involved around



15,000 troops and militia. Six battalions of TNI (Indonesian army) were involved including the notorious 744 and 745, along with para-militaries. They sought to create the impression of an outpouring of anger by local pro-Indonesian people, but the violence was clearly well-orchestrated. People were forced to burn their own villages, and the Catholic church came in for particular attention as it is seen as being pro-independence. There was a clear intention to do as much damage as possible; to punish this resistance by utterly wiping out all infrastructure.

The result of the vote was announced on September 4th. How many died in the ensuing madness is anyone's guess. The military made sure attention was initially focused on UN personnel and journalists, ensuring that they soon fled for their lives, also thus ensuring that there were no outside witnesses. It may be easy to sympathise with their overriding sense of self-preservation, after all journalists had been killed in Timor before. However, these were the very people who had promised to stand by the people so they could make a free choice, who had guaranteed their safety, pledged they were not going anywhere. And yet, when they were called on to honour that pledge, they fled. It was Rwanda all over again, as the UN turned tail and ran! With friends like these, don't expect a long life! Even some UN staff were describing the UN's decision as "gutless" and "disgraceful".

It was soon clear that General Wiranto had lost control of his forces in East Timor; and with the UN standing in the sidelines looking a complete joke, the major powers needed a response to restore the faith. So it was that Indonesia reluctantly agreed to a limited 'peace-keeping force' led by Australia (who have ambitions of a role in the Asia-Pacific region not unlike the USA's world-policeman role). This force was barely able to secure Dili, let alone anywhere else, so the violence continued. It was a token gesture; the island had already been put to the torch. Over 220,000 people had been forcibly marched into West Timor – fleeing the fighting according to Indonesia.

It was also part of the strategy to provoke FALINTIL into fighting back, so it could be viewed as a civil war, which would no doubt have changed the perspective of the international powers. This was also how the Indonesian media was selling the events to the public across the archipelago, and to anyone else who would swallow it. As a result, September 7th saw the imposition of martial law.

The East Timorese had no doubt already had quite enough of that!

When the UN returned, it was amazingly still full of bluster, proclaiming that the perpetrators of atrocities would be brought to justice. However, in reality, the forensic teams (who were so conspicuous in the Balkans) didn't arrive for weeks, allowing any evidence to be disposed of. It was claimed that the military dumped many bodies out at sea, many others were incinerated in buildings. The Indonesian government meanwhile set up their own human rights investigation. It turned up a bit of incriminating evidence, such as a mass grave containing 25 bodies in West Timor (*The Independent* reported this from Kuala Lumpur as "one of the worst atrocities of the violence in East Timor"). No doubt they will scapegoat a few minions along the way to be seen to be doing something. In fact, the new government of President Abdurrahman Wahid, and Vice-President Megawati Sukarnoputri (democrat's favourite and daughter of Sukarno) have initiated a human rights court for Indonesia. It offers the military the chance of effectively trying their own, and will of course only be effective from the time it comes into effect, so all past abuses are in effect forgiven.

### Democracy and law

This is the two-pronged assault of global law. First we have the UN running around playing policeman and bringer of democracy, and on the other hand we have the spectre of the increasing power of international law courts to punish those they see fit to. Many people support this idea, sickened by the mass slaughter of the 20th Century. But it rarely brings justice; it won't bring justice to East Timor; and it won't change anything in the future. Consider Rwanda, where international war crimes tribunals were set up under the auspices of the UN following the enormous slaughter, which they'd previously run away from. Ordinary soldiers (of the losing side, of course) were herded into prison camps, where they were slowly tried by a judiciary made up of locals (from the winning side) with no training or experience, little funding, and an inability to check alibis properly. No doubt some are guilty and some are not; many are executed or imprisoned, innocence seems to be not an option. By contrast political leaders are being tried by international judges from the likes of Europe and the USA (paid for by the UN), provided with teams of lawyers (again paid for and sent from the West); no

shortcuts are taken in amassing evidence, and guess what? They're getting off in droves! One trial in which a number of people were accused of ordering the execution of an estimated 10,000+ in a football stadium, of which there was absolutely no doubt of their guilt, got off on a legal technicality. It seems that the UN certainly is exporting Democracy and Justice to these countries after all!!!

### The future

Of the 220,000 marched into West Timor, the UN was charged with repatriating them to East Timor. While they continued to bumble around, the militias and military ran the camps. People were tortured, murdered and raped. Many people were apparently trans-located to other parts of Indonesia as a final act of spite. Whether the UN will ever manage to locate these people must be considered extremely doubtful. Whether they will even try is not certain. It has been alleged that children have been shipped back to Jakarta to work in prostitution, a notion that should be taken seriously. It is well known that the officer class in the Indonesian army has deep connections with organised crime, to a point where one doesn't happen without the other. It is often claimed that this is their major source of income. This outrage has passed without comment from the UN, the world powers, or the media.

For those in East Timor, the possibility of starvation is a real prospect if destroyed foodstuffs, including seed, are not replaced quickly. If this is not done, along with the repairing of infrastructure, then the spectre of disease won't be long in rearing its head either.

East Timor is in big trouble even if it can hold on to this status without Indonesia returning. Its infrastructure is devastated and someone will have to foot the bill. No doubt the international financiers will be bearing down on them to ensure their compliance to international capital, saddling them with a nice fat debt right from the outset. Indonesia could still make life very difficult for them. For example, East Timor's most obvious source of wealth is oil in the Timor Sea, but Indonesia and Australia have already carved that up for themselves. It is unlikely they'll get much support from the world powers in pursuit of this.

East Timor has given us a taste of capitalism's idea of liberal democracy. Voting as an ideal is placed above everything, particularly justice. The UN, as some benevolent, neutral force for good, is clearly a thinly-veiled lie concealing its role as yet

another stick which the major powers, and primarily the USA, use to beat recalcitrants who won't rollover and allow themselves to be exploited by capital as is seen fit. The now fast developing international law supposed to bring justice to all merely protects the injustices of the ruling classes. The media, that bastion of freedom, who like to tell us that we should lay down our lives to defend their freedoms, were ill-informed, inaccurate, pandering to authority, and downright gutless. After all, isn't it much more important to chase around minor celebrities and catch them in compromising positions? Yep, I'd die for that. Wouldn't you?

East Timor raises questions for anarchists too, despite the fact that it highlights many of our core arguments. How can we make solidarity more affective? "Start your own revolution" is all very well, but in reality has often meant doing nothing.

East Timor was not a national liberation struggle; it was a brutal fight for survival. What choice did the Timorese have? Of course, it became a national liberation struggle, but in the end was there any other alternative? They were annihilated merely for consorting with Marxists who they happened to share a common language with; imagine what would have happened to them if they'd declared an intention to conform to the principles of libertarian communism!

Welcome to the Free World!!

## Resistance!

THE AF HAS now produced 13 issues of our agitational *Resistance*, moving from a bimonthly schedule to a regular monthly appearance.

*Resistance* has appeared at an important time. Our widespread distribution of our agitational bulletin means more and more people are coming in contact with revolutionary anarchist ideas. This is at a time when there is growing disgust at the Labour Party, and the Stalinist and Trotskyist left are spiralling rapidly downwards into decline. There is a real chance of building a credible anarchist movement in this country – with consistent and dogged work.

If you would like the next 12 issues of *Resistance* send POs, cheques for £4 payable to 'AF' to AF, PO Box 375, Knaphill, Woking, Surrey, GU21 2XL. Better still take bundles of *Resistance* to distribute in your area.



# CONSERVATION:

## Anti-people or anti-capitalist?

We continue our series on the land.

HUMAN BEINGS HAVE been responsible for transforming their environment to such a degree, that no part of the planet, nor indeed the atmosphere, can be said to be unaltered by our species. Humans' particular abilities to conceptualise, analyse and then act on their surroundings have given the impression that they stand outside, and above, the natural environment. This tendency has been reinforced as the majority now live in urban areas with 'nature' something to go and visit.

However, we are now beginning to realise that humans do not have unlimited power. In fact, nature has as much, if not more, power. This can be seen in several ways. Firstly, we are beginning to realise our whole survival as a species depends on the environment. We cannot do whatever

we want without repercussions. The list of unforeseen consequences of our actions is growing: the ozone layer, global warming, pollution of land, air and water, the impact on the food chain and health, the increase in uncontrollable viruses. We think we have 'subdued' nature, only to find it has other ways of resisting our domination.

Secondly, despite the development of chemical products in laboratories, GM foods, synthetic clothes etc, it is still the land and its resources that form the basis of everything. Without the land, the rest of the human-made edifice we have constructed on its foundation would crumble like a pack of cards. Many people are beginning to realise this and are taking an interest in how their food is grown or raised and asking questions about the limit of our natural resources. Many no longer believe that technology can cure any problem arising from the misuse or overuse of the land. They no longer trust the 'experts' in business, government or the scientific community, who pronounce on whether something is safe to consume or has negative environmental consequences. People who live and work on the land may be more aware, but given the increased specialisation of production, no one has an overview of the whole process and therefore they have to rely on 'experts'.

### Understanding the whole

The BSE scare and animal welfare concerns mean that buying meat in a supermarket is no longer an unthinking act. Consumers may be interested in a variety of issues such as what was fed to the animals, how they were cared for, how they were transported and killed, the wages paid to the workers, the subsidies paid, the financial situation of the farmer and then the effects that eating meat has on health, not to mention the ethical issue of eating meat in the first place! Society may be becoming more complex, but that has only fuelled people's desire to understand the whole.

However, in a capitalist system, where the profit-motive is the driving force, those who own and control production and distribution have no interest in revealing any

information as it would most likely show that their greed has meant that the production process and product are suspect.

People's interest in the natural environment comes not only from concerns for physical and economic survival. As our food, clothes and homes seem to be increasingly 'unnatural', so does our leisure time. People spend thousands of days of their lives engaged in virtual reality activities, such as becoming emotionally involved with characters in soaps or novels, being frightened by films or immersing themselves in simulations and games on their computers. There has been a backlash to this trend amongst many sections of the population. And it is to the natural environment that they turn, looking for activities that provide them with more mental, emotional and physical satisfaction. So, not only are we dependent on the rest of nature for our physical survival, but also for enjoyment of many other aspects of life.

Walking has become the most popular leisure activity. Angling has always been popular, but now water sports such as kayaking and windsurfing are surpassing that. Many others enjoy skiing, snowboarding, mountain biking, camping, birdwatching or just having a picnic in a park. Though all classes are fleeing the city because of stress, pollution, ugliness and the need for space, how they engage with the country-side is affected by social class.

The middle class may rent a country cottage, whereas a working class family may stay in a caravan. However, the most popular activities such as walking and climbing are not as middle class as many assume. We only have to think back to the mass trespasses of the thirties, read the climbing literature on working class Glaswegians or simply talk to people on the hills. Reading the extensive literature published for those involved in outdoor activities as well as talking to participants, reveals the extent of their passion. These activities, done in hills, on rivers, on or by the sea, in wildlife reserves, give them the most satisfying experiences of their lives. And it's not just the contact with the land, it's the camaraderie of the social relations that are based on the sharing of experiences

which are on a different level from sharing an episode of East Enders.

### Smokescreen

Therefore, despite 200 years of urbanisation, all human beings, as a species, belong to the land and therefore need to be part of the discussions on how we should care for it. Though the Countryside Alliance says that 'townies' have no right to participate in these discussions, this is only a smoke-screen for the private landowners to prevent anyone but themselves making decisions about the land. To challenge this, we need an anti-capitalist perspective.

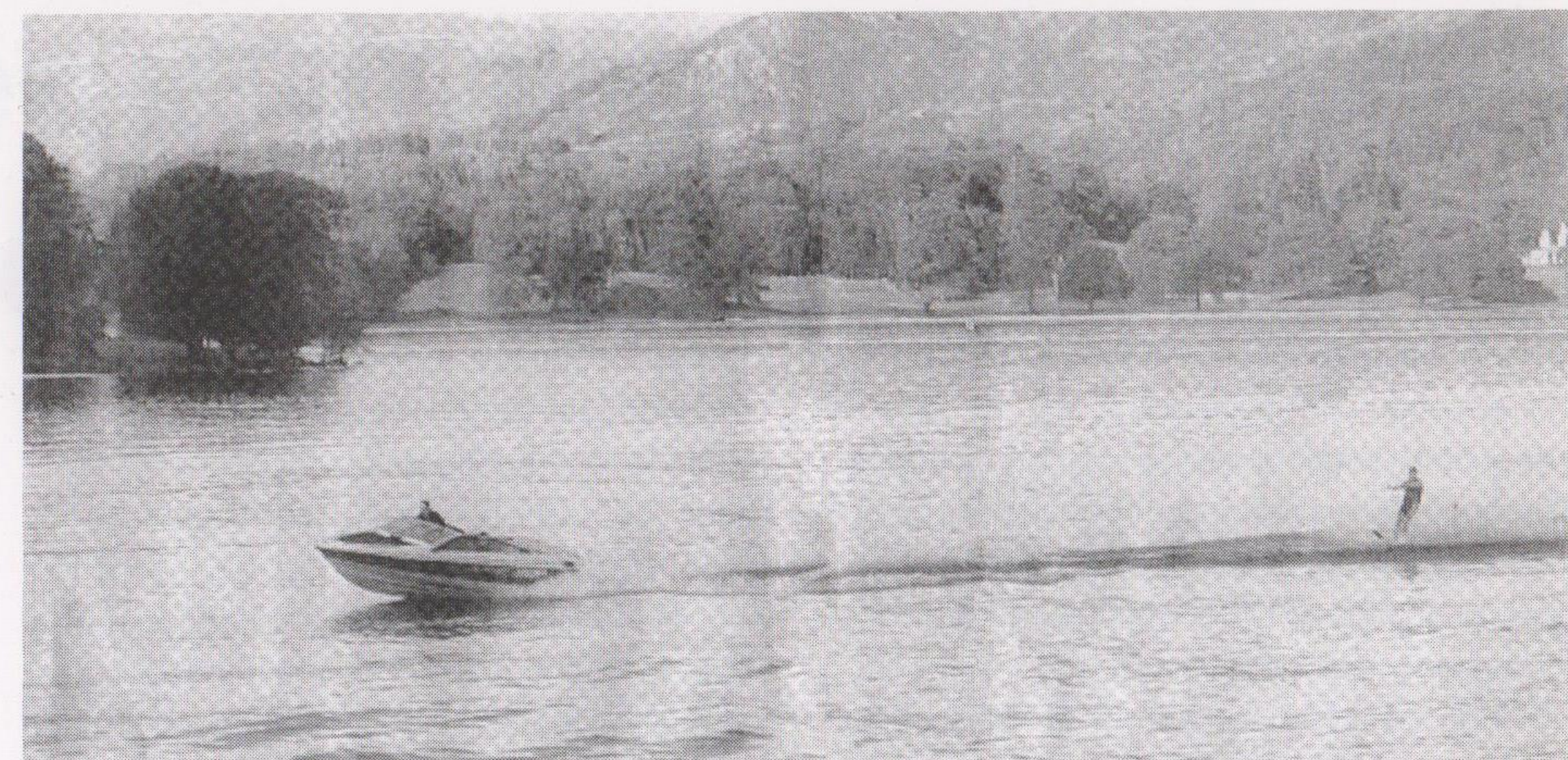
What is meant by this is to see that the way the land is used is dominated by the fact that it is under private ownership and that its products are produced and sold for profit. This system has to go. But once we reject claims to own the land and say it belongs to everyone, we will still have the problem of deciding how to care for the environment and how it is to be used. In other words, though capitalism has brought about unprecedented environmental destruction, the end of capitalism will still leave us with many issues to resolve.

Conflict will exist around many issues. People will have diverse opinions about how the land is to be used based on what they like to eat, or what they think is ethical to eat, and on what they like doing in their leisure time. Getting rid of capitalism will not resolve debates about vegetarianism or whether skiing, angling, deer stalking or mountain biking should be allowed.

One of the biggest areas for conflict is conservation. This might come as a surprise. Conservation is normally considered to be a 'good thing'. However, by looking at some current conservation issues in Scotland, it is clear that the concept of conservation is not as straightforward and unproblematic as it would first appear.

### Survival and 'rights'

Conservationists claim they are not 'interest' groups, but are looking after the interests of the planet. Their perspective is based on a combination of two arguments: human survival depends on the conservation of the natural environment, and the rights of other species to survive for their own sake, not just for the needs of humans. A wide range of conservation groups such as the John Muir Trust would like to see more 'wild places' defined as places with 'minimum human impact' and groups who focus on the preservation of one species or sub-species like the RSPB. Some official



conservation bodies like Scottish Natural Heritage say their aim is to reconcile conservation with 'sustainable' economic development. All groups focus on the conservation of the non-human environment, not on how that environment can be used to benefit humans. However, this perspective has many problems.

### Exclusivity

Firstly, it is extremely difficult to define such terms as 'wild', 'minimum impact' and 'sustainable'. The only way to have wilderness is to have no humans at all.

Groups like the John Muir trust talk in terms of people enjoying and needing wild places. But if everyone went there, they wouldn't be wild anymore. The only thing that keeps some areas of the world relatively wild is the fact that most of the world's population doesn't have the money to travel. Look at the circus on Everest. And how many people can afford the £20,000 to go? Landowners claim that it is their use of the land for deer and grouse that has kept the land from being turned over more to conifer plantations or being trampled to death by thousands of feet. Therefore we have the Highland Clearances to thank for the 'wilderness' of the Scottish hills! In other words, wilderness exists because of exclusivity. In an anarchist-communist society we would not want this, so the issue of how to preserve wild places yet still have human beings enjoy them, needs to be addressed.

The only other solution would be to just not allow humans in certain areas. Related to this is the issue of how much human beings should intervene in nature. For example, forest fires are quite 'natural' in wilderness areas, but should we just let them burn unchecked? We have already intervened to such an extent that to just let things go could have disastrous effects, not just for us, but for other species.

This brings us to another issue. Which

species do we choose to conserve? If we just do nothing, we condemn certain species. For example, the introduction of rabbits has caused all sorts of problems for a variety of habitats. On an island in the Outer Hebrides, hedgehogs have managed to migrate there in huge numbers and are threatening the very existence of the wader bird species. Letting 'nature take its course' could mean the destruction of other species that we value.

### Human values

A major area of debate in Scotland which illustrates a number of issues is the implementation of the policy of regeneration of native forests. There are several underlying assumptions being made by those who see this regeneration as top priority. First, is that 'native' is 'good' and 'foreign' is 'bad'. Sitka spruce is the villain and the Scots pine is full of virtues. Therefore anything foreign must be removed.

Most would probably agree that the Scots pine is lovely and that as under 2% of Scotland is native forest it would be nice, if there was more of it. But this view is still based on human values of what is good and bad and human perceptions of what is 'natural'. Many species now in Britain are not native, yet people have grown to accept them and also there is the danger that the same attitude will apply to everything, including people! In addition, the natural environment is changing all the time, with or without the influence of people, so that we need to be careful about basing our argument for what is a desirable landscape on what is 'natural' or 'native'. Things like the midge and malaria are natural and native, but I don't see any conservation groups arguing for the protection of the midge or the reintroduction of malaria!

Those in favour of regeneration also have to show that trees are somehow more worthy than other forms of nature. It needs to be shown that if the goal is not just some





regeneration but regeneration on an extensive scale, that this is preferable to having a landscape filled with deer, grouse moors or the familiar bare, often snow-capped hill. It is unclear whether their argument is based on ecological or aesthetic reasons. Saying something is 'native' or 'natural' is not enough. What benefits would forests bring that would make it worth getting rid of other species and habitats? The policy of regeneration in Creag Meagaidh Nature Reserve could only be implemented by the killing of hundreds of deer.

To answer this question we are reliant on 'experts'. The health of Scotland is said to depend on having the forests back in order to stop erosion. But what evidence is there that there have been any floods or natural disasters caused by erosion in Scotland? Is it such a problem that it is worth getting rid of other habitats that people value? Other experts argue that native woodlands will provide a habitat for many species such as the pinemartin. But again, we appear to be making a trade-off between species. If the grouse moors are replaced by forest then the native red grouse will be in danger and, since many birds of prey feed on young grouse, this could affect them as well. I am not arguing against the regeneration of native forests. However, it is important to be aware that such policies are based on human beings' perceptions of what is desirable and we are also reliant on 'experts' with their specialised knowledge. This debate needs to be opened up and knowledge shared so that policies are not just made by a few who use their expertise as a form of power.

### Livelihoods

Another potential area of conflict for the conservationist is the impact on human livelihoods of conservation policies. The conservationist is most likely to have a job in a conservation agency of some sort, or to have a job that is not directly dependent on the land. If the conservationist aims to promote birds of prey or trees at the expense of deer, grouse and livestock then this could affect the livelihood of many estate workers and farmers. Now, people may argue that there shouldn't be grouse shooting, deer stalking or meat eating in the first place, but try saying that to people on the land, people who are also members of the working class. You will be ensuring that the myth of the urban/rural divide continues to the advantage of the landowners.

Conservationists need to keep in mind that humans are dependent on the products of the land. We can't just use it as some-

thing to look at. The conflict between conservation and farming interests can be seen in attitudes towards birds of prey. Again, it is humans who are making a value judgement about what species to conserve. Birds of prey are well-known for killing other animals. Farmers see them as the villains who threaten their young livestock such as lambs whilst birdwatchers will travel hundreds of miles to catch a glimpse of an eagle. Of course we want these creatures to live, but what about our food supply? In a post-capitalist society we will still have similar problems. We need to use the land to produce products for human consumption and we may have to make difficult decisions about killing animals. Of course, we may find better solutions and many problems may no longer exist in an anarchist society, but rural workers must be an integral part of these discussions and their experience cannot be replaced by the admirable romanticism of the stereotypical urban-based conservationist. We should then be able to come up with ways of both providing for human needs and promoting the flourishing of other species.

### Recreation

Conservationists have also come into conflict with recreational groups. In many debates that have sprung up around the country over the impact of recreational activity on the land, conservationists are keen to reduce the amount and intensity of human activity. They argue that a number of activities have a negative effect on the environment and therefore need to be banned or curtailed. Conservationists, most from outside the area, were key players in the campaign to stop the funicular railway in the Cairngorms with many skiers and locals keen to see it go ahead. The increase in walking has led to serious path erosion and now mountain biking is adding to this problem. The RSPB wants climbers banned from many crags as they are thought to disturb bird life. No one would argue that people should be allowed to pursue their favourite pastime to an extent that the world is destroyed. But some would argue that the huge enjoyment that people get from various outdoor activities is worth some damage to the environment. Some will often agree with the conservationists but when it comes to their activity, they think the conservationists go too far.

### Defenders?

Generally, then, conservationists could be seen as defenders of the land against

human beings using the land to satisfy both their physical and mental, emotional needs. But the problem is: who are these conservationists? They are also human beings, and human beings with particular positions within a class-based society.

Though private landowners are still extremely powerful in making decisions about land use, increasingly, various conservation organisations are playing a key role. The RSPB is one of the largest landowners in Scotland and the National Trust and Scottish Natural Heritage are very powerful organisations. These organisations claim to speak for the 'public'. They publish a vast amount of information concerning loss of habitat and species and present a view on what should be done. Despite all the information on the urgency of the problems, their plans for action are often very limited, due to the fact that they are closely linked to private landowners and politicians. The problem is that we are isolated from the process of gathering information and making decisions. This reinforces the view that it is humans vs. the environment, with these conservation bodies setting themselves up as the defenders of the land.

Though more radical environmental groups may propose stronger solutions, they share many things in common with the official bodies. They still see themselves as defending the environment from humans as if they aren't humans themselves. This isolates them from the both the urban and rural working class. We need a strategy that encompasses the principles of conservation as well as recognising that humans are an integral part of the land. The land can never be untouched by humans just as we can never remain untouched by our environment. The issue is how we can survive as a species whilst at the same time allowing our environment to flourish. As has been pointed out, there are some very difficult decisions to make and there are no easy answers.

Getting rid of capitalism will not get rid of the problems. However, it should ensure that environmental destruction is slowed down and it should empower people to become experts themselves and get involved in the decisions-making process. It is not just self-professed conservationists who should make decisions and provide expertise. All those who work and enjoy the land are involved and that is everyone. Conservationists can inform the debate but the land is something to be lived in and enjoyed, not just something to be 'gazed' at. That is what every other species does, so why can't human beings do the same?

# Young People and the Nazis

## The Edelweiss Pirates

*Hitler's power may lay us low,  
And keep us locked in chains,  
But we will smash the chains one day,  
We'll be free again.  
We've got fists and we can fight,  
We've got knives and we'll get them out.  
We want freedom, don't we boys?  
We're the fighting Navajos.*

WHY WERE THE NAZIS able to control Germany so easily? Why was there so little active opposition to them? Why were the old parties of the SPD and KPD unable to offer any real resistance? How could a totalitarian regime so easily contain what had been the strongest working class in Europe?

We are taught that the Nazis duped the German population and that it took the armed might of the Allies to liberate Europe from their enslavement. This article aims to show how the Nazis were able to contain the working class and to tell some of the tale of resistance that really took place.

### Dealing with the opposition

Acting with a ruthlessness which surprised their opponents, the Nazis banned their opponents, the Social Democrats and the Communists. For the working class this was far more serious than just the destruction of two state capitalist parties. It was accompanied by the annihilation of a whole area of social life around working class communities. Many of the most confident working class militants were arrested and sent to concentration camps.

The repression was carried out legally. The SA (the brownshirts) now acted in collaboration with the police. Their brutal activities which had once been illegal but tolerated, now became part of official state activity. In some circumstances this meant simple actions like beatings. In others, SA groups moved into and took over working class pubs and centres. The effect was to isolate, intimidate and render powerless the working class.

Many workers believed that the Nazis could not remain in power forever. They believed that the next election would see them swept from power and 'their' parties returned. Workers only needed to bide

their time. When it became clear that this was not going to happen, the myth changed. The role for oppositionists became to keep the party structures intact until such time as the Nazis were defeated. There is no doubt that even the simple act of distributing Socialist (SPD) or Communist (KPD) propaganda took an incredible degree of heroism, for the consequences of being caught were quite clear to all – beatings, torture and death. It meant that families would be left without breadwinners, subjected to police surveillance and intimidation. The result was often passivity and inaction.

As early as 1935, workers were aware of the consequences that 'subversive' activity would have on their families. A



blacksmith in 1943 expressed the problem simply: "My wife is still alive, that's all. It's only for her sake that I don't shout it right into their faces... You know these blackguards can only do all this because each of us has a wife or mother at home that he's got to think of... people have too many things to consider. After all, you're not alone in this world. And these SS devils exploit the fact."

Throughout the period of Nazi rule there was industrial unrest, there were strikes and acts of disobedience and even sabotage. All these, however, attracted the

attention of the Gestapo. The Gestapo had the assistance of employers and stooges in the workforce. The least a striker could expect was arrest. As a consequence, those who were politically opposed to the Nazi state kept themselves away from industrial struggle. To be arrested would have led not only to personal sacrifice, but also could have compromised the political organisations to which he or she belonged. To reinforce the message to workers, the Gestapo set up special industrial concentration camps attached to major factories.

To put the intensity of Nazi repression into context, during the period 1933-45, at least 30,000 German people were executed for opposing the state. This does not include countless others who died as a result of beatings, of their treatment in camps, or as a result of the official policy of euthanasia for those deemed mentally ill. Thousands of children were declared morally or biologically defective because they fell below the Aryan 'norm' and were murdered by the doctors. This fate also befell youngsters with mental and physical disabilities as well as many who listened to the wrong kind of music.

However, Nazi domination of the working class did not rely solely on repression. Nazi industrial policy aimed to fragment the class, to replace working class solidarity with Nazi comradeship and solidarity with the state.

To start with, pay rises were forbidden. To strengthen competition, hourly rates were to be done away with. Piece rates became the norm. If workers wanted to earn more then they would have to produce more. Workers' interests were to be represented by the German Workers' Front (DAF), which they were forced to belong to and which of course represented solely the interests of the state and the employers.

Unable to obtain pay rises with their employers it became common in a situation of full employment for workers to move from one factory to another in search of higher wages. On the one hand, this defeated the Nazi objectives of limiting pay, on the other hand it further weakened bonds of solidarity between workers.

Knowing that they could not rule solely through fear, the Nazis gave 'welfare' concessions to the working class. Family



allowances were paid for the first time; organised outings and holidays were provided at low cost. For many workers this was their first opportunity to go away on holiday. Social activities were provided through Nazi organisations.

There is little evidence that the Nazis won over the working class ideologically, nonetheless, this combination of repression and amelioration served to confuse many who would otherwise have been outright opponents.

The spectacles we have all seen of Nazi rallies, book burnings, parades and speeches are not evidence that workers were convinced of Nazi rule. It was clear to all what the consequence of not attending, of not carrying a placard or waving a flag would be. However, they must have increased the sense of isolation and powerlessness of those who would have liked to resist. As a result there was little open resistance from working class adults to the Nazis throughout their period in power.

### Young people

If the Nazi policy towards adults was based on coercion, their policy towards young people was more subtle. Put simply, the intention was to indoctrinate every young person, to make them a good national socialist citizen proudly upholding the ideals of the party. The means chosen to do this was the Hitler Youth (HJ).

By the end of 1933, all youth organisations outside the Hitler Youth had been banned – with the exception of those controlled by the Catholic Church which was busy cozying up to the Nazis at the time. Boys were to be organised into the Deutsches Jungvolk between the ages of 10 and 14 and the Hitler Youth proper from 14 to 18. They quickly incorporated around 40 per cent of boys. Girls were to be enrolled into the Bund Deutsche Madel (BDM), but the Nazis were much less interested in getting them to join. The objective was to get all boys into the HJ. When this failed to take place, laws were passed gradually making it compulsory by 1939.

In the early days, being in the HJ was far from being a chore. Boys got to take part in sports, go camping, hike, play competitive games – as well as being involved in drill and political indoctrination. Being in the HJ gave youngsters the chance to play one form of authority off against another. They could avoid schoolwork by claiming to be involved in HJ work. The HJ provided excuses when dealing with other authority figures – like parents and priests. On the other hand, they could also blame

pressures from school in order to get out of more unpleasant Hitler Youth tasks! In some parts of the country the HJ provided the first opportunity to start a sports club, to get away from parents, to experience some independence.

As the 1930s went on, the function of the HJ and BDM changed. The objectives of the regime became more obviously military and aimed at conquest. The HJ was seen as a way of recruiting and training young men into the armed forces. As war became more likely, the emphasis shifted away from leisure activities and into military training. State policy became one of forcing all to be in the HJ. It made seemingly harmless activities, like getting together with your mates for an evening, criminal offences if they took place outside the HJ or BDM.



Some of the Cologne Edelweiss Pirates. All were later hanged.

The HJ set up its own police squads to supervise young people. These Streifen-dienst patrols were made up of Hitler Youth members scarcely older than those they were meant to be policing.

By 1938, reports from Social Democrats in Germany to their leaders in exile were able to report that: "In the long run young people too are feeling increasingly irritated by the lack of freedom and the mindless drilling that is customary in the National Socialist organisations. It is therefore no wonder that symptoms of fatigue are becoming particularly apparent among their ranks..."

The outbreak of war brought the true nature of the HJ even more sharply into focus. Older HJ members were called up. More and more time was taken up with drill and political indoctrination. Bombing led to the destruction of many of the sporting facilities. The HJ became more and more obviously a means of oppression.

As the demands for fresh recruits to the armed forces became more intense, the divisions within the HJ became more acute. The German education system at the time was sharply divided along class lines. Most working class children left school at the age of 14. A few went on to secondary or grammar schools along with the children of middle class and professional families. As older HJ members were called up, the middle class school students took the place of the leaders. The rank and file was increasingly made up of young workers hardly likely to take too well to being ordered about at HJ meetings! It is not difficult to imagine the scene of a snotty doctor's kid still in school trying to give orders to a bunch of young factory workers and having to use the threat of official punishment to get his own way. Dissatisfaction grew. Initially, the acute labour shortages of the early war years meant that the Nazis could not resort to the kind of terror tactics that they employed against other dissidents. As the war went on, many of these young people's fathers died or were sent to the front. Many were bombed out of their own homes. The only future they could see for themselves was to wear a uniform and to fight for a lost cause.

One teenager said in 1942: "Everything the HJ preaches is a fraud. I know this for certain, because everything I had to say in the HJ myself was a fraud."

By the end of the 1930s, thousands of young people were finding ways to avoid the clutches of the Hitler Youth. They were gathering together in their own gangs and starting to enjoy themselves again. This terrified the Nazis, particularly when the teenagers started to defend their own social space physically. What particularly frightened the Nazis was that these young people were the products of their own education system. They had no contact with the old SPD or KPD, knew nothing of Marxism or the old labour movement. They had been educated by the Nazis in Nazi schools, their free time had been regimented by the HJ listening to Nazi propaganda and taking part in officially approved activities and sports.

These gangs went under different names. Their favoured clothes varied from town to town as did their badges. In Essen they were called the Farhtenstenze (Travelling Dudes), in Oberhausen and Dusseldorf the Kittelbach Pirates, in Cologne they were the Navajos. But all saw themselves as Edelweiss Pirates (named after an edelweiss flower badge which many wore).

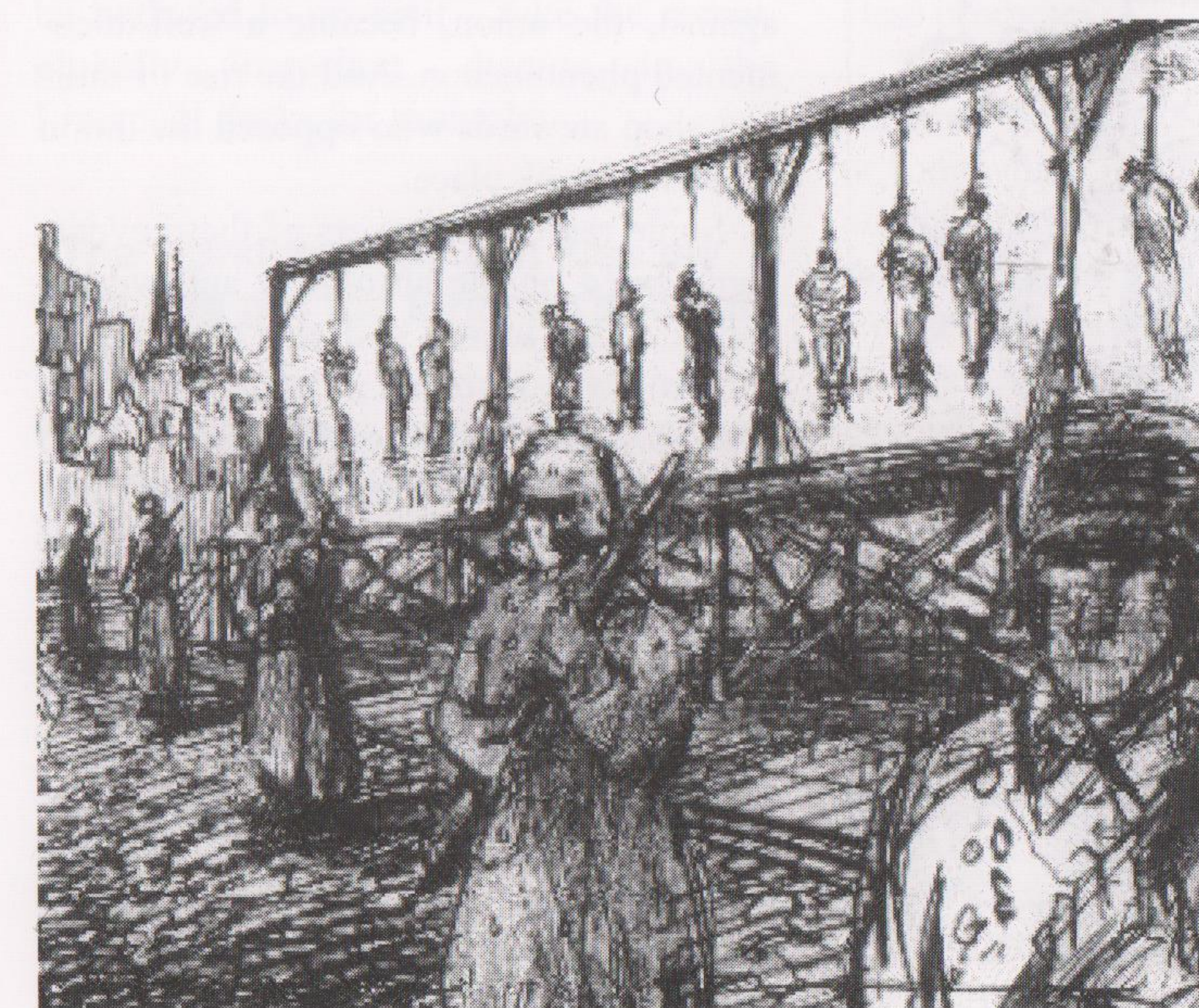
Gestapo files in Cologne contain the

names of over 3,000 teenagers identified as Edelweiss Pirates. Clearly, there must have been many more and their numbers must have been even greater when taken over Germany as a whole.

Initially, their activities were in themselves pretty harmless. They hung around in parks and on street corners, creating their own social space in the way teenagers do everywhere (usually to the annoyance of adults). At weekends they would take themselves off into the countryside on hikes and camping trips in a perverse way mirroring the kind of activities initially provided by the HJ themselves. Unlike the HJ trips, however, these expeditions comprised boys and girls together, so adding a different, more exciting and more normal dimension than that provided by the HJ. Whereas the HJ had taken young people away for trips to isolate and indoctrinate them, the Edelweiss Pirates expeditions got them away from the party and gave them the time and space to be themselves.

On their trips they would meet up with Pirates from other towns and cities. Some went as far as to travel the length and breadth of Germany during wartime, when to travel without papers was an illegal action.

Daring to enjoy themselves on their own was a criminal act. They were supposed to be under Party control. Inevitably they came across HJ Streifen-dienst patrols. Instead of running, the Pirates often stood and fought. Reports sent to Gestapo offices suggest that as often as not the Edelweiss Pirates won these fights. "I therefore request that the police ensure that this riff-raff is dealt with once and for all. The HJ are taking their lives into their hands when they go out on the streets."



The activities of the Edelweiss Pirates grew bolder as the war progressed. They engaged in pranks against the Nazis, fights against their enemies, and moved on to small acts of sabotage. They were accused of being slackers at work and social parasites. They began to help Jews, army deserters and prisoners of war. They painted anti-Nazi slogans on walls and some started to collect Allied propaganda leaflets and shove them through people's letterboxes.

"There is a suspicion that it is these youths who have been inscribing the walls of the pedestrian subway on the Altenbergstrasse with the slogans 'Down with Hitler', 'The OKW (Military High Command) is lying', 'Medals for Murder', 'Down with Nazi Brutality', etc. However often these inscriptions are removed, within a few days new ones appear on the walls again." (1943 Dusseldorf-Grafenberg Nazi party report to the Gestapo)

As time went on, a few grew bolder and even more heroic. They raided army camps to obtain arms and explosives, made attacks on Nazi figures other than the HJ and took part in partisan activities. The Head of the Cologne Gestapo was one victim of the Edelweiss Pirates.

The authorities reacted with their full armoury of repressive measures. These ranged from individual warnings, round-ups and temporary detention (followed by a head shaving), to weekend imprisonment, reform school, labour camp, youth concentration camp or criminal trial. Thousands were caught up in this hunt. For many, the end was death. The so-called leaders of the Cologne Edelweiss Pirates were publicly hanged in November 1944.

However, as long as the Nazis needed workers in armament factories and soldiers for their war, they could not resort to the physical extermination of thousands of young Germans. Moreover, it is fair to say that the state was confused as to what to do with these rebels. They came from German stock, the sort of people who should have been grateful for what the Nazis gave.

Unwilling to execute thousands and unable to comprehend what was happening, the state was equally unable to contain them.

### Wall of silence

So why has so little been heard of the Edelweiss Pirates? When I started researching this article, I found it extremely hard to find information about them. Most seemed to revolve around the research of the German historian Detlev Peukert, whose writings remain essential reading. Searches of the internet revealed only two articles.

A number of explanations come to mind. The post-war Allied authorities wanted to reconstruct Germany into a modern western, democratic state. To do this, they enforced strict labour laws including compulsory work. The Edelweiss Pirates had a strong anti-work ethos. So they came into conflict with the new authorities too. A report in 1949 spoke of the "widespread phenomenon of unwillingness to work that was becoming a habit of many young people". The prosecution of so-called 'young idlers' was sometimes no less rigid under Allied occupation than it was under the Nazis. A court in 1947 sent one young woman to prison for five months for 'refusal to work'. So the young became enemies of the new order too.

The political opponents of the Nazis had been either forced into exile, murdered or hid their politics. Clandestine activity had centred on keeping party structures intact. They could not afford to acknowledge that physical resistance had been alive and well and based on young people's street gangs! To the politicians of the CDU and SPD, the Edelweiss Pirates were just as much riff-raff as they were to the Nazis. The myth of the just war used by the allies relied heavily on the idea that all Germans had been at least silent during the Nazi period if not actively supporting the regime. To maintain this fiction the actions of 'street hooligans' in fighting the Nazis had to be forgotten.

Fifty-five years on, interest in the Edelweiss Pirates is beginning to resurface. More is being published on them and a film is being planned. We need to make sure that they are never forgotten again. As the producers of the film say: "the Edelweiss Pirates were no absolute heroes, but rather ordinary people doing extraordinary things." It is precisely this that gives us hope for the future.

*We march by banks of Ruhr and Rhine  
And smash the Hitler Youth in twain.  
Our song is freedom, love and life,  
We're the Pirates of the Edelweiss.*



# WORKPLACE NOTES

## Or a brief history of recent mystifications

Two issues ago we began a series called Workplace Notes, which was to be a regular bulletin from workers of all kinds about their situations. Not having managed to get a proper second contribution to this series(!), we have decided to do a piece that briefly explores our thinking on the economy and the role of sections of the working class. This will be elaborated on in future issues. It is hoped that this article and those that follow will create a useful level of discussion.

LAST YEAR I READ a pamphlet from 1974 by Martin Glaberman called *The Working Class and Social Change*. This is a gem of a pamphlet, despite the traces of Marxist baggage that it carries, and in these days of 'Eco', and now 'Anti-Capitalist', mystification, I feel it is essential reading for those who want to understand just how we may one day remove the capitalist economic system. Here is a quote from it:

"The ability of the working class to transform society relates both to the reality of [their] struggle and where it is located. That is, all of the resources, which everyone associates with wealth, with capital, and with the government – means of transportation, means of communication, newspapers, railroads, factories – belong to the ruling class only as long as people permit it. What happens when the workers do not want to run the trains, or send their own messages on the telegraph, or print their own newspapers? All of a sudden this vast

power and wealth disintegrates. That is the reality of social revolution and that is the reality of the modern industrial working class."

In 1974, Glaberman was trying to confront ideas that were circulating around society that the working class was disappearing in the industrialised countries. On one hand, it was argued that manual (blue collar) workers were disappearing because of developments in automation and it was also argued that with the general rise of affluence the old-fashioned working class had become middle class because they now 'owned' more things like cars and televisions. On the other hand, it was being argued that the working class was vanishing because everyone was joining it. ("We are all workers together, students, teachers, blue collar workers, white collar workers, and salaried people of various kinds... [all] ...except for a handful of capitalists.") Many of us will remember Margaret

Thatcher's claim that she was working class because she worked.

Unfortunately, Glaberman's (and others') efforts to oppose this sort of thinking, which was, of course, a mystification engendered by sections of the ruling class to lessen the significance of the working class to capitalism in peoples' eyes, have largely failed. The really sad thing, though, is that the ideology he tried to combat had very quickly entered the heads of people who called themselves "revolutionaries" and it has become even more entrenched down the years. There are specific historical reasons for this phenomenon. Let's take a little look at them.

### The unions

By the 1960s, it was becoming increasingly apparent to many workers in those countries where the trades unions were fully established and incorporated into the State, that rather than support the interests of its members the unions in reality removed any power from the collective mass of the workers and placed it in the hands of elected, and virtually unassailable, officials. Instead of being a tool with which workers could fight their exploiters, the union turned out to be an organisation which relentlessly restrained workers and kept them in the dark. Wildcat strikes, that is, strikes without the support, and even against, the union, became a well-documented phenomenon. And the rise of militant shop stewards who opposed the union leadership took place.

Some radical observers of these events commented on the absolutely anti-worker nature of the unions and also the dangers and problems involved in trying to use, or even take over, the union hierarchy for the benefit of the members. Correctly, they came to the conclusion that the unions could not somehow be 'reclaimed' by the workers, for a whole lot of reasons based on real events. Many libertarians, however, on seeing what they saw as the 'failure' of workplace resistance to capital (when they should have merely noted the inevitably anti-proletarian position of all unions) chose to look for inspiration outside of the workplace and aimed at creating a move-

ment of people against oppression. This idea was aided by the apparent success of specific movements against specific oppressions, such as 'feminism' or the war in Vietnam.

But these movements, as worthy as they were, were not working class movements, and there was never anything concrete or effective in them that potentially challenged the existence of the capitalist economy itself, the source of the exploitation and oppression of the majority of the world's population. The glamour of such movements allied to the presumed 'failure' of rebellion in the workplace, led many radicals to abandon any serious study of the motor of the prevailing economy and society and pin their hopes on a generalised insurrection of nice people amongst the poor and oppressed who suddenly saw the need to live very differently.

This moving away from looking at society in terms of class and peoples' relationship to the means of the production of wealth, and instead looking at particular and general oppressions, has been aided over the last couple of decades or so by an apparent shift in the outlook of our rulers and the media. This shift was designed to deride the old-fashioned ways of 'industrial conflict', to make strikes and the like seem archaic and also doomed to failure for workers. And indeed, with the mass unemployment that was engineered in the 1980s to help facilitate a restructuring of the economy, along with some major offensives against sections of the working class (eg the miners and printers in Britain), it could easily appear to the gullible that industrial conflict was out-of-date and pointless. The good people of the press and television are now so 'disinterested' in old-fashioned conflict at work that they can't be bothered to cover it – take the recent, globally important, dispute in the Liverpool docks for example.

**"The working class can kiss my arse, I've got the foreman's job at last."**

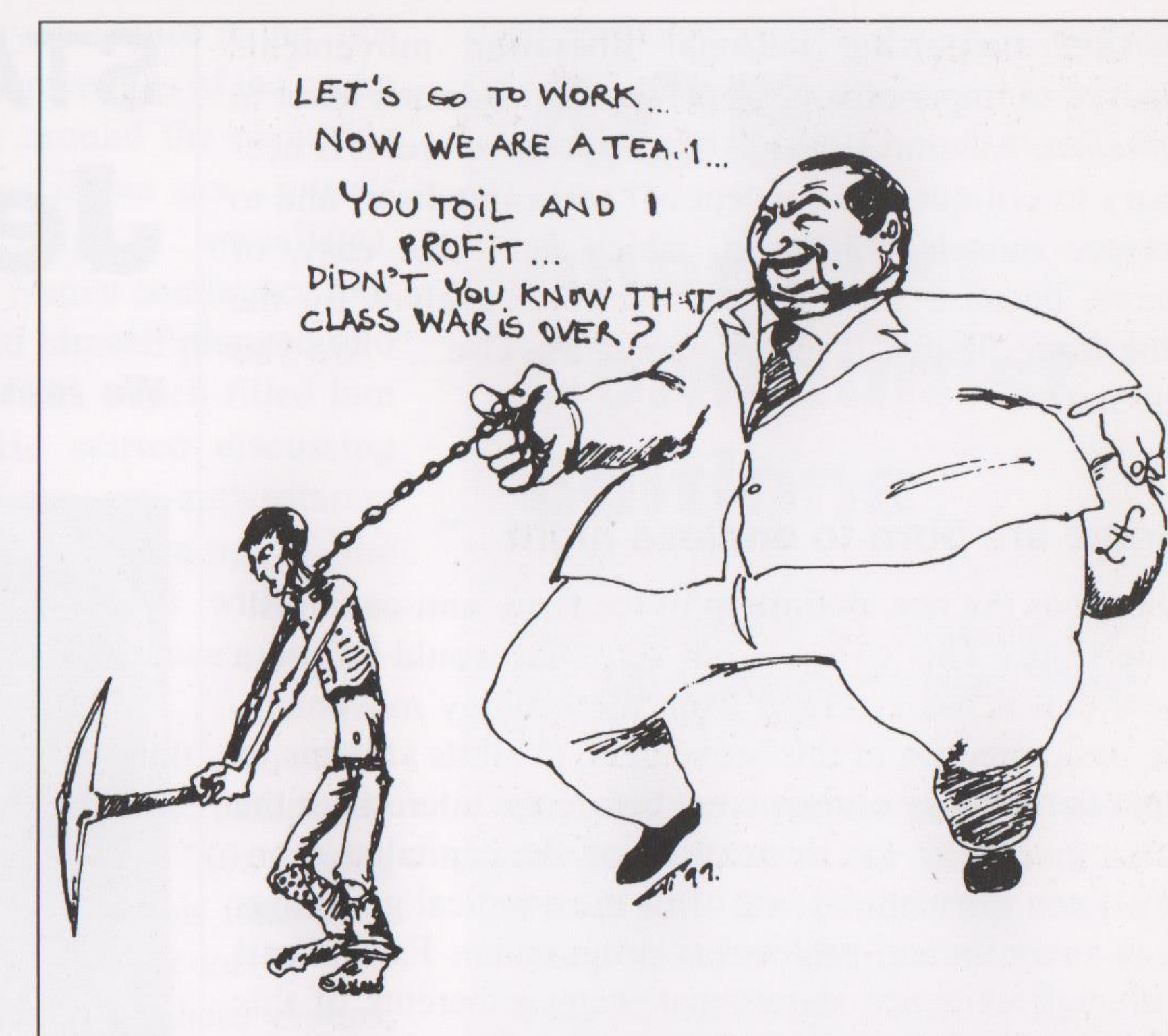
Do you remember the television sitcoms and the like of the 1960s and '70s in Britain? Of course, they were all crap, but they reflected the acceptable pre-occupations of 'society' at the time and a lot of them discussed, however stupidly, issues of class and class conflict.

Do you remember when the Channel 4 soap opera *Brookside* started? The central family had a shop steward for a father. Now, of course, we have our own analysis of the general role of the shop steward, but

for the writers of *Brookside*, the shop steward was a potential working class hero. As the 'Thatcherite' 1980s wore on, though, this character became more difficult for the writers to sustain and, I think, he ended up as a tyrannical bully who hit his wife and seemed to be having a nervous breakdown. They had another character in the soap who was a scab,

but after a while he became one of the nicest and soundest characters. Another character became a shop steward at one point, but he was really weak and dodgy and I think he ended up becoming a drug dealer and heroin addict, before being rehabilitated as a self-employed type. In fact, being self-employed is by far the dominant mode of existence for soap opera characters across the board. These days 'ordinary people', the 'working class', on television, do not actually work for others but own their own businesses. There is more to this than simply the possibility that it is easier to write about self-employed people. When *On the Buses* was on TV, the working class really existed, but now it doesn't really exist and everyone has disappeared into a land where most people are self-employed or 'professional'. Do you get the drift of what I'm trying to say? The ruling ideas of our society are the ideas that the ruling class promotes.

We are now encouraged to think that the economy is beyond us (it lives in the city, or somewhere in a computer), that there is no manufacturing going on (except maybe in distant lands), and that there is no longer a definable working class. ('revolutionary' groups such as Green Anarchist have 'gone beyond' the concept of the working class altogether, and the nearest they get to a description of capitalism is a vague and unreliable notion of 'civilisation'. People like Lady Thatcher can pat themselves on the back for a job well done when they see so-called revolutionaries with such little understanding of the world they live in). If we accept any of this clever mystification then we lose sight of what global society rests on, what makes it tick. The way people live now, all over the world, is due sim-



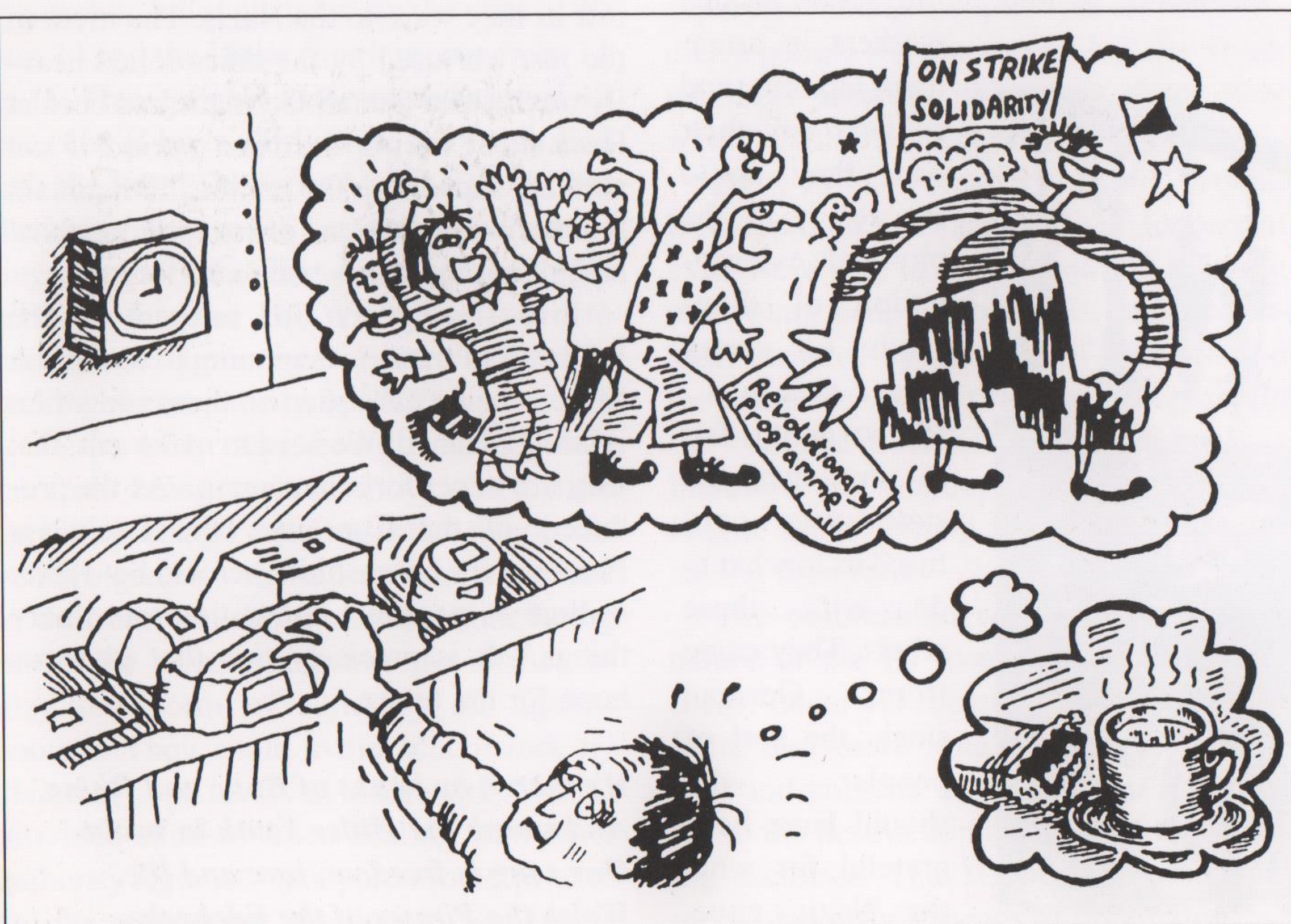
ply to the capitalist economy, the thing that keeps it going is the work that proletarians do, their waged labour. The only thing that will stop the economy, and therefore the society which rests on it, is the seizure by workers of all the means of production and their transformation into useful things, or their destruction.

These days many 'revolutionaries' are unaware of what is important about the fact of the working class. No matter how a revolution against capitalism might develop, it is vitally important to remember that unless those workers who work in the most important sectors of the economy (that is, most important for the running of the entire economy and the maintenance of profits) actually wrest control of those sectors from the bosses then there will be no revolution.

### Anti-capitalism

The mystification around the fact of the working class and its relationship to capitalism (the economy) has reached new and giddy heights recently with the newly fashionable concept of 'anti-capitalism'. No longer is 'anti-capitalism' something that implies a thoroughgoing critique of the entire global economy and the position of the working class. Today, it has become something that means supporting 'local' capitalist businesses and economies against large multi-national corporations, it means supporting nationalist struggles around the world against 'foreign' tyranny. 'Anti-capitalism' is the new 'anti-imperialism'.

In the old days, those of us who were not 'anti-imperialist' but were against imperialism, held such a view and practice because 'anti-imperialist' is a political





position supporting national liberation movements opposed to imperialist powers (see Jean Barrot's letter to *Aufheben*, Autumn 1998). At present, therefore, it is necessary to critique this concept of 'anti-capitalism' and to distance ourselves from it, which isn't that easy, of course, because we used to identify ourselves by the same term, though it meant something else... Are you with me?!

### "Some are born to endless night..."

Where has the new definition of the term 'anti-capitalist' come from? This writer is not sure, but would hazard a guess that it has emerged from the ecology movement. The basic premise of this movement, in all its variants, is to put the ecology of the planet before the interests of the working class or the destruction of the capitalist economy. Even the name of one of its most radical groupings gives away its anti-proletarian programme: Earth First! (Although evidence shows that many adherents of this network have subverted the original premise in order to pursue class struggle objectives).

Still, it is obvious to anyone that the priorities of 'ecology' and the green movement have deeply permeated anarchist and leftist politics across the world. Before this had happened, though, it was the case that anti-imperialism had permeated the same milieu. Thus, we have constantly had support for the leaderships of national liberation struggles, and indeed the concept itself, from large swathes of anarchists and leftists over the last 40 years at least. (The latest trendy thing is still support for the unashamedly nationalist Zapatistas of Mexico, whose programme is clearly anti-proletarian and pro-capitalist and pro-State - see *Unmasking the Zapatistas* by Wildcat, photocopy available from the AF for £2, inc p&p.)

Now, if you mix up the old-style anti-imperialism with the new-style green hatred of large companies (which position always, therefore, favours small companies) in a big plastic bucket, what you come up with is a concept that could easily be called 'anti-capitalist'. And there we are, the mystification, the confusion, is complete!

During and after the Seattle demonstration against the World Trade Organisation, Bill Clinton, genius that he is, came out in support of the demands of the protesters and stated that, in future, events like the WTO conference should involve representatives from all the different groups and campaigns present. He exclaimed his sympathy for local capitalism and nationalist self-determination, and worries over the power of the 'big' countries and the big corporations. Clinton has also recently proved himself worthy of the 'anti-capitalist' tag by attacking that giant corporation and monopolist, Microsoft. Have we really gone so far down the road, away from any understanding of what lies at the heart of our society and what will actually have to be done to finally destroy the power of the capitalist economy, that we must grudgingly accept that even Bill Clinton is a comrade? It sure is looking that way.

Read the Glaberman pamphlet.

Photocopied copies of the Glaberman pamphlet are available for £2, cheques made payable to the AF, at the usual address.

## STATELESS PERSON Jean Malaquais

We restart our occasional series on culture.



WLADIMIR MALACKI was born in Warsaw in 1908 of a Polish family of Jewish extraction which had renounced Judaism. His father was a man of letters, a teacher of Latin and Greek, and a great lover of books. His mother was a socialist militant of the Jewish internationalist organisation, the Bund, which had developed in Poland. His family perished in the Nazi concentration camps.

In 1926, he decided to leave Poland, travelling through Russia, Romania, Turkey and Palestine, before ending up in France.

Malacki had idealised France as the political paradise. He was soon to be rudely awakened. The France of 1926, riddled with xenophobia and anti-Semitism, gave a cold welcome to the young man. His Polish passport was seized by the authorities, making him a stateless person. He got work in a number of jobs, including working in the mines at Gardanne in the south of France. Here he worked alongside workers from all over the world, from all parts of the French Empire, from Indochina and Africa. This experience was to be the basis of his first novel *Les Javanais*. At the same time he devoured every book that came his way. Disgusted by nationalism and xenophobia, he contacted the Trotskyist Ligue Communiste, but, unlike his friend Marc Chirik, did not join it.

By now going under the name of Jean Malaquais, Malacki ended up in Paris in 1935, where he worked unloading crates at Les Halles market. In Paris he made contact with the left-wing of Trotskyism organised in the Union Communiste and the Italian Bordigists who had been forced to flee to France and Belgium by the rise of fascism and who edited *Bilan*.

In Paris, he read the paper of the writer André Gide, where he regretted never having to earn a living. Writing a sarcastic reply to the writer he was surprised to receive a cheque for 100 francs from Gide. He tore this up in disgust, writing back: "If you think you can buy a little bit of paradise on my back with 100 francs you are mistaken."

The correspondence continued, with Gide ending up employing Malaquais as his private secretary, giving him the opportunity to write himself. Gide realised that the young man was a gifted and passionate writer. *Les Javanais*, a social novel on immigration and the xenophobic France of the extreme right organisations, was rejected by one major publishing house, but was finally published in 1939, receiving the prestigious Renaudot prize, and being translated into several languages.

### Escape

In the meantime, the Spanish Civil War had broken out and Malaquais went there in 1936. Here he joined the militia columns of the left Marxist POUM and the Lenin Column formed of dissident Italian Bordigists like Enrico Russo (Candiani). He had the misfortune to be arrested and confronted by Ilya Ehrenburg, Russian Stalinist writer working for the Russian secret police and was close to being shot as a 'fascist agent' and 'provocateur'. He managed to escape back to France. Here he made contact

with Victor Serge, the French-Russian writer and with the Yugoslav, Ante Ciliga, who had both been released from Stalin's Soviet concentration camps.

Despite being stateless, the French State judged Malaquais sufficiently French to conscript him into the Army on the outbreak of war. He was captured by the Germans, but managed to escape and fled south to Marseilles. Here he fell in with Serge and the surrealists André Breton and Benjamin Peret. He got employment in Le Croque-Fruit, a co-operative run by Trotskyists. With Marc Chirik, he denounced the exploitation of workers in the co-operative. They were both sacked. Chirik, under the name of Marc Lavergne, is the hero of Malaquais' masterpiece *Planète sans visa* (Planet without visa), published in 1947.

Malaquais managed to get a boat to Venezuela and then Mexico in 1943. Here he associated with Peret, Breton, Serge, the French left socialist Marceau Pivert, and the Spanish Civil War veteran Grandizo Munis. He was able to edit his *Carnets de Guerre* (War Notebooks) which he had started at the beginning of the World War. It was a platform for his denunciation of all forms of patriotism and chauvinism, and took an internationalist stand against both sides in the war. Attacked publicly by Serge, as was Marceau Pivert, Malaquais broke with him.

He spent the next few years in the United States, returning to France in 1947-48. Here, he joined the left communist group, Internationalisme, which had emerged from Bordigism and in which his old friend Marc Chirik was active. Others active in this group for a time were Maximilien Rubel, Louis Evrard and Serge Bricianer.

### Independent

He returned to the States in 1948, teaching European literature up to 1968, without being attached to a university, but acting as a roving speaker. He was given American citizenship, although he always regarded himself proudly as a stateless person. No longer a militant and of an increasingly independent libertarian communist outlook, he made contact with various council communists around the world like Rubel in France, Anton Pannekoek, and Henk Canne-Meyer in Holland. In the States he made contact with the German council communist Paul Mattick and the Marxist-Humanist Raya Dunayevskaya, as well as Herbert Marcuse. He also put up Albert Camus when that writer visited the

States. On a long stay in France in the '60s he participated in the meetings of the group animated by Rubel, around the magazine *Cahiers pour le socialisme des conseils* (Notebooks for council socialism). Returning to France from a conference tour in Australia he found himself plunged into the events of May 1968, which filled him with enthusiasm. He started discussing with the groups of the anti-authoritarian council communists. Returning to the States he kept up his links with these groups through correspondence and frequent visits.

He visited Poland in 1980 and talked with workers in the Solidarnosc unions. He moved back to Europe in the '80s, living in Switzerland maintaining his links with the groups in Paris. He never totally subscribed to the certainties of these groups, but had a gut reaction to the myth of socialist Russia and to all forms of the State. As he said, he was: "Anti-cop, anti-capitalist, anti-all that which alienates man (sic)". These were to be consistent themes in his activities and his writings. His political journey led him from the left of Trotskyism to a anti-authoritarian council communist position not far from that of class struggle anarchist communism. Another theme in his works was his affirmation of life, that despite everything life was worth living. As he said: "The best thing about life is life!" Malaquais died in December 1998.

This year marks the republication of many of his books in France, including *Planète sans visa*. The background to this book is the situation in Marseilles in 1940, peopled with black marketeers, collaborators and fascists on one hand, and on the other Jews, refugees, anti-fascists seeking a visa to escape France. The book is filled with immense compassion for the refugees, and somehow he describes them individually, in a whole range of accents. As this century ends, and as we remember the great waves of refugees produced by the world wars, and gaze in horror at the mass exoduses in the Balkans and East Timor, this book is a testament for all the wretched of the earth. With a bit of luck, someone will translate it into English.



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# In the tradition: part two

## The Second World War and after

We continue our series *In the tradition*, on the roots of the Anarchist Federation's politics.

FEW ORGANISED POLITICAL groups opposed the Second World War from a class position. Those minorities who did included the anarchists, council communists (the remnants of the revolutionary workers movement of the 1920s in Germany, Holland and elsewhere) and left communists such as the Bordigists (Italian communists in exile who supported the positions of the first leader of the Italian Communist Party). In occupied Europe these groups were isolated and faced great dangers in trying to continue any political intervention. During the war years theoretical developments were understandably limited, militants were too busy dodging bullets, the draft etc. Following the thesis of their deceased leader, the Trotskyists predicted the inevitable collapse of the post-war Soviet Union to barbarism/capitalism or the 'political' revolution (read change of leadership) which would put Russia back on the road to socialism.

### Social democratic consensus

Optimism about possibilities for revolutionary change immediately following the war were shared by many on the left, anar-

chists and libertarian communists included. Memories of the wave of revolution at the end of the first world war remained. However, the way the pre-war revolutionary movement in Germany had been smashed, and the dominance of those 'heroes of the resistance', the Communist Parties in France and Italy, meant that upheaval was limited to strike movements rather than insurrections. Benefiting from the economic boom brought by post-war restructuring, a social democratic consensus prevailed in Europe. In Eastern Europe once powerful workers' movements were now under the Stalinist jackboot, having been 'liberated' by the Red Army. So, many revolutionaries felt the need to reassess the socialist project in light of the developments over the past 30 years.

In 1946, a dissident faction developed within the French section of the Trotskyist Fourth International, whose leading lights included Cornelius Castoriadis, Claude Lefort and Francois Lyotard. Their movement away from Trotskyist orthodoxy led them to leave the Fourth International and, in 1948, to launch a journal, *Socialisme ou Barbarie* (Socialism or Barbarism) which rejected the Trotskyist idea that the USSR

was a "degenerated workers state". Rather, SoB argued that the Soviet Union was a form of state capitalism.

In itself, this was hardly a revelation, after all the Soviet Union had been characterised as such, by anarchists and left communists, as early as 1921. What was innovative was the idea developed by SoB of the

bureaucratisation of society as a universal phenomenon, of which the Soviet Union was a particular variation ("totalitarian" as opposed to "fragmented" as in the West). This theory of bureaucratisation had consequences for the subsequent development of SoB's politics.

Early meetings of SoB were attended by – among others – French Bordigists, Fontenis and fellow comrades, and by the people who would later set up the Situationist International. The meetings must have been very interesting!

### Autonomous struggle

Other than analysing the nature of the Soviet Union, the group also focussed on the importance of workers' autonomous struggles against their official 'representation', such as the Labour and Communist Parties, but particularly against the trade unions. Castoriadis made no attempt to hide the influence of the Council Communist Anton Pannekoek, in his understanding of socialism as something the working class does, rather than something that is done to it or is forced upon it by objective circumstance.

The post war boom which showed little sign of abating led some within SoB, particularly but not only Castoriadis, to believe that capitalism had overcome its tendency to fall into periodic crisis and that, consequently, the existence of social struggle pointed to a different crisis, namely that of the organisation of social life under bureaucratic capitalism. For Castoriadis, the struggle between the owners of the means of production and the workers had been superseded by the struggle between the order-givers and order-takers, between the bureaucracy and those who carry out the orders of the bureaucrats. The struggle, therefore, had come down to the struggle over who manages production, the producers themselves or another strata.

In terms of approach to organisational concerns, SoB started off from a partyist perspective but became more spontaneist

until its demise in 1966. Castoriadis himself dropped out of political life to become a professional intellectual (a critical psychologist no less!) soon after. Francois Lyotard found well-paid work defending class society and theoretical cretinism as a guru of post-modernism.

In 1963, SoB split and a group known as Pouvoir Ouvrier (Workers' Power, not to be confused with the British Trot group) emerged, critical of the 'new' class analysis, arguing for a more 'traditional' class analysis and the need for a vanguard-type organisation not so far removed from that of the Trotskyists. This group showed how a political current can get it half right!

### Platformism

The influence the Organisational Platform of the Libertarian Communists (see 'In the tradition: part one') was felt particularly strongly in France and the debate between Platformists and Synthesists raged in France throughout the 1930s. The Second World War put these arguments on ice for a time but they immediately resurfaced with the coming of 'peace'. The French Anarchist Federation became, for a time, dominated by Platformists, changing its name to the Libertarian Communist Federation (FCL) and excluding those who opposed the changes. The FCL emphasised engagement in the day-to-day struggles of the exploited and oppressed and an opposition to philosophical navel-gazing.



### Manifesto of Libertarian Communism

In 1953, Georges Fontenis of the FCL published the *Manifesto of Libertarian Communism*. The Manifesto, which remained untranslated into English until almost 35 years later, remains probably the most coherent example of Platformist writing available. In it, Fontenis powerfully argues that anarchism is a product of social and class struggle and not an "abstract philosophy" or "individualist ethic". Rather, he states: "It was born in and out of the social and it had to wait for a given historic period and a given state of class antagonism for anarchist communist aspirations to show themselves clearly for the phenomenon or revolt to result in a coherent and completely revolutionary conception."

The *Manifesto*, like the Platform before

it, defended theoretical unity; tactical unity; collective responsibility and a collective method of action, organised through a specific organisation. Whilst it rejected the notion of the 'Dictatorship of the Proletariat' as a term too open to interpretation to be of use, the *Manifesto* was viewed by some to lean too much towards a Leninism *sans* Lenin.

### Noir et Rouge and the Groupes Anarchistes d'Action Révolutionnaire

In 1955, the Revolutionary Anarchist Action Groups (GAAR) split from the Fédération Communiste Libertaire (FCL), unhappy with all direction the FCL was taking (including flirtations with 'revolutionary' electoralism!), but wishing to continue to defend Platformism.

The group launched a magazine *Noir et Rouge* (Black and Red) in 1956, which continued until 1970. The group changed its name to *Noir et Rouge* in 1961 and a year later some of those involved (re)joined the French Anarchist Federation. *Noir et Rouge* had as their initial aim to "Prepare the basis of a rejuvenated anarchism" and in order to do this the group attempted a reappraisal of the revolutionary experiences of the 20th century, particularly the experiences of workers' councils in Russia and the collectivisations in the Spanish revolution but also those of Hungary 1956 and the more recent attempts at 'selfmanagement' in Yugoslavia and Algeria. This led the group, particularly after 1961, to criticise all 'traditional' revolutionary politics, including Platformism.

It would appear that *Socialisme ou Barbarie* and *Noir et Rouge* were converging from very different backgrounds during the 1950s and early 1960s. Unlike the majority of the GAAR, the magazine group turned away from a stress on organisation towards a more spontaneous approach.

Unlike *Socialisme ou Barbarie* however, little of their writing was published in the English language and so their pioneering attempts to 'rejuvenate' anarchism are almost unknown outside France. Perhaps the most (in)famous associate of *Noir et Rouge* was Daniel Cohn-Bendit, 'Danny the Red', who would play a role as spokesperson for the May events in France. *Noir et Rouge*, like SoB, and the Situationists (see below) had an important influence on the build-up to May 68 and the events themselves, despite the limited circulation of their ideas and publications. Something worth remembering when plodding on with our activities and propaganda!

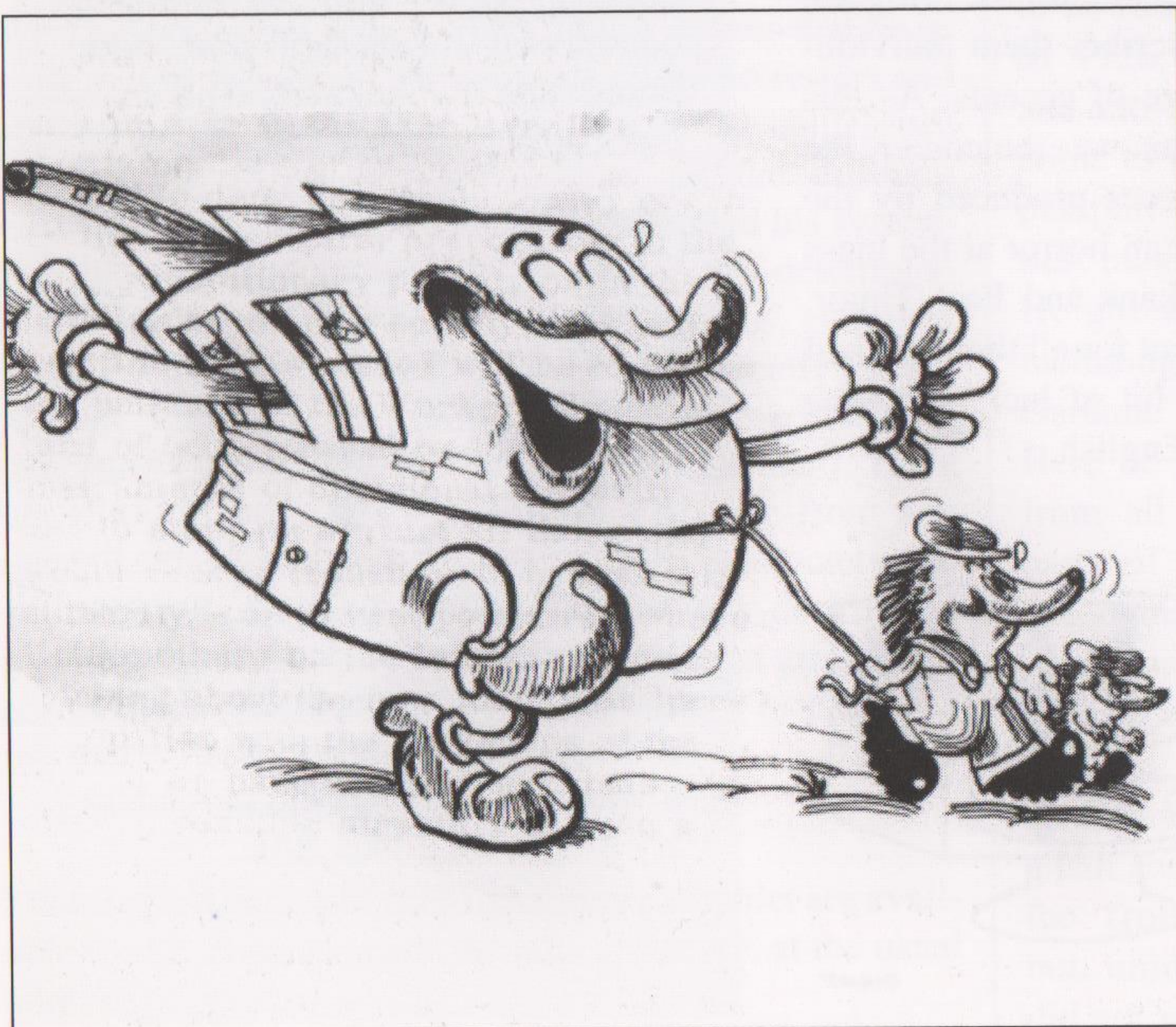
### Gruppi Anarchici d'Azione Proletaria.

In post war Italy, anarchists influenced by the Platformist tradition and by the critical Marxism of the German communist Karl Korsch emerged. They opposed the direction of the large synthesist organisation, the Italian Anarchist Federation (FAI), which was beginning to reject class analysis in favour of a vague humanistic version of anarchism. Unlike the French Platformists, the Italians decided to split off from the FAI and form their own organisation, the Anarchist Groups of Proletarian Action (GAAP) in 1949/50. They emphasised the need for a rigorous political approach, an engagement with Marxism, and defended the class basis of anarchism. Much of their energy was engaged in the struggle against Stalinism, in the shape of the massive Italian Communist Party. On an international level they called for the opening of a revolutionary 'Third Front' against American and Soviet imperialism and were part of the short-lived Libertarian Communist International alongside comrades in France and Spain. Isolated from traditional anarchism and ultimately marginalized by Stalinism in a period of low class struggle, the GAAP eventually merged with *Azione Comunista*, a confederation of dissident Trotskyist, Bordigist and former Communist Party militants, from which they were after a short time effectively expelled. This led to the group's disintegration.

### Hungary 1956

The Hungarian uprising of 1956 came as a breath of fresh air against the stink of Stalinism and had repercussions worldwide, inspiring many socialists of the post war generation to question not only the validity of 'actually existing socialism' but to ask "what is the content of socialism?" The thesis of *Socialisme ou Barbarie* concerning the anti-bureaucratic nature of authentic socialism seemed acutely relevant. The group itself took the view that: "...over the coming years, all significant questions will be condensed into one: are you for or against the action and the program of the Hungarian workers?"

So what exactly was the Hungarian Revolution and why was it such a turning point? Hungary in 1956 was under the government of Imre Nagy, a watered-down Stalinist entrusted by Moscow to 'liberalise' Hungary to put a secure lid on social discontent. Despite his 'reforms', the system of exploitation in the name of socialism continued to engender opposition.





On 23rd October 1956, following a mobilisation in the capital, Budapest, by students demanding moderate reform, some of a 200,00 crowd of demonstrators attacked the state radio station and so began the Hungarian revolt. If students and intellectuals had provided the spark, it was the working class who carried the flame and made sure that the arrival of Soviet tanks was met with fierce resistance.

Over the next few days a wave of insurrectionary fervour enveloped Hungary as workers left their factories and offices to take part in assaults upon the headquarters of the local 'red bourgeoisie' and their secret police. Workers' councils emerged in every industrial centre, effectively taking power at all levels. These councils co-ordinated at a local and regional level and attempted to realise a form of workers' control in the workplaces.

The 'programme' of the workers' councils varied from area to area but nowhere did they call for the reintroduction of 'free market' capitalism. The limitations of their form of workers' control never had time to show themselves as the Hungarian revolution, failing to spread beyond its national borders, eventually succumbed to the military might of the Soviet army. The experience of the councils, which developed spontaneously, without the leadership of any vanguard party and which within a matter of days took responsibility for production, distribution and communication on a national level had an enormous impact on those in the revolutionary movement willing to see past Stalinist lies about an attempted 'capitalist restoration' by 'nationalists'. Whatever the limitations of the councils' programme, the fact that the working class had once more shown its capacity for autonomous action was an inspiration for those fighting for working class self-organisation.

### Solidarity

Three years later in Britain, a current developed, under the influence of Socialisme ou Barbarie, which broke with Trotskyism (in this case the Socialist Labour League led by Gerry Healy). Originally called Socialism Reaffirmed, the group would become known as Solidarity and exist in one form or another for almost 30 years. Although initially seeing itself as a Marxist group critical of the Bolshevik heritage, it soon developed its own character as a 'national organisation' of libertarian socialists. In 1961 it published an English translation of the key statement of the Socialisme ou Barbarie group and conse-

quently published much of the writing of Castoriadis (under the pen name Paul Cardan), including his post-1964 work.

Like Castoriadis, Solidarity defended the need for workers' self-management of production and of society, but not all those involved in the organisation fully accepted his notion of the new revolutionary 'subject' being "order takers" rather than proletarians. The Situationist International (see below) suggested that, thanks to Solidarity's translator, the group received Castoriadis' work "...like the light that arrives on Earth from stars that have already long burned out" and were unaware that the founder of Socialisme ou Barbarie had long since died, politically speaking.



Although the Anarchist Federation generally rejects the term 'self-management' with all its ambiguity, it is obvious that many people within Solidarity interpreted the term as meaning the end of production for sale or exchange. Whatever Solidarity's weaknesses (not least their fairly lax attitude to maintaining an international organisation and their lack of political direction after they effectively split around 1980), Solidarity was involved in important revolutionary activity and publishing for at least 20 of its 30 years, producing a wealth of literature defending a coherent vision of libertarian socialism that was unavailable elsewhere. Compared to many of the 'class struggle' anarchists in Britain during the 1960s and 1970s, they developed a consistent body of politics that recognised the need for working class self-organisation outside social democratic and Leninist models.

### The Situationist International

The Situationist International was formed in 1957, from the unification of three avant-garde artistic/cultural groups. For the first five years of its existence, its main theoretical focus was on developing a critique of art, culture, town planning and

anything else that they considered worth critiquing. Only in 1962, did the group – which, although numerically small, was geographically spread across Europe (based mainly in France) – really develop a political perspective based on salvaging what was authentically revolutionary from the history and practice of the workers' movement. Much of their early political orientation was influenced by Socialisme ou Barbarie, and, like that group, their ambition was to help in the creation of a 'new revolutionary movement' based upon the proletariat of the 'industrial advanced countries'. By the time the situationists had formulated their positions, Socialisme ou Barbarie had, however, lost hope in the proletariat and had lost any dynamic presence in revolutionary political life (see above).

One major problem with any appraisal of the Situationist International is the legacy left by some of their followers and interpreters (known sometimes as Pro-Situs), which leaves them looking like disgruntled, destructive intellectuals with very little positive contribution to make. Actually, judged on their own writings and record of activity, they were far from the 'arty misfits' their opponents would like to paint them. The situationists took Marx's conception of alienation and applied it to society as a whole rather than just to the world of work. They argued that alienated labour was central to existence in all aspects of daily life, as proletarians were confronted by their own alienation at every turn about. In culture, sport, sexuality, education, pseudo-rebellion, everything that could be turned into a commodity had been. This society of mediated images, of 'spectacle' could only be swept away by a proletarian revolution and the realisation of "generalised self-management", which for the situationists meant the abolition of wage labour and the state: "The only reason the situationists do not call themselves communists is so as not to be confused with the cadres of pro-Soviet or pro-Chinese anti-worker bureaucracies." Italian section of the S.I. (1969)

So, by their actions should they be judged. In the May 1968 events in Paris the situationists, their comrades and allies were faced with a real-life revolutionary situation. Did they cut the mustard? Find out next time.

### To come... May 1968 until today

Read *A Brief Flowering of Freedom: The Hungarian Revolution 1956*, a pamphlet produced by London Anarchist Federation, 60p plus postage from AF (London) 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

## Greg Minns

GREG MINNS IS a young activist from North East England, incarcerated against his will in a residential home for the mentally ill in Lancashire (see *Organise!* 52). Here he has had a lot of his privileges removed. His posters have been taken down off the wall, his weights confiscated as well as his records and music system. Greg writes: "Basically, they are saying, 'Sell out and you can have your stuff back'... they're kind of saying listening to alternative music, wearing different clothes and being into civil rights is an illness that has to be conditioned out of you."

Greg is asking for letters of support to be sent to him at Millerbank, 27 Carlton Road, Burnley, Lancs BB11 4JE.

You can write to the manager of Millerbank, Mr Ian Millerin, at same address, asking him to restore Greg's privileges. You can write to his doctor asking him not to resection Greg, and asking him to reduce or stop medication and give Greg permission to leave the residential home and get his own flat: Dr MA Launer, Lamont Clinic, Burnley General Hospital, Casterton Avenue, Burnley, Lancs BB10 2PQ.

## Stormy Petrel pamphlets

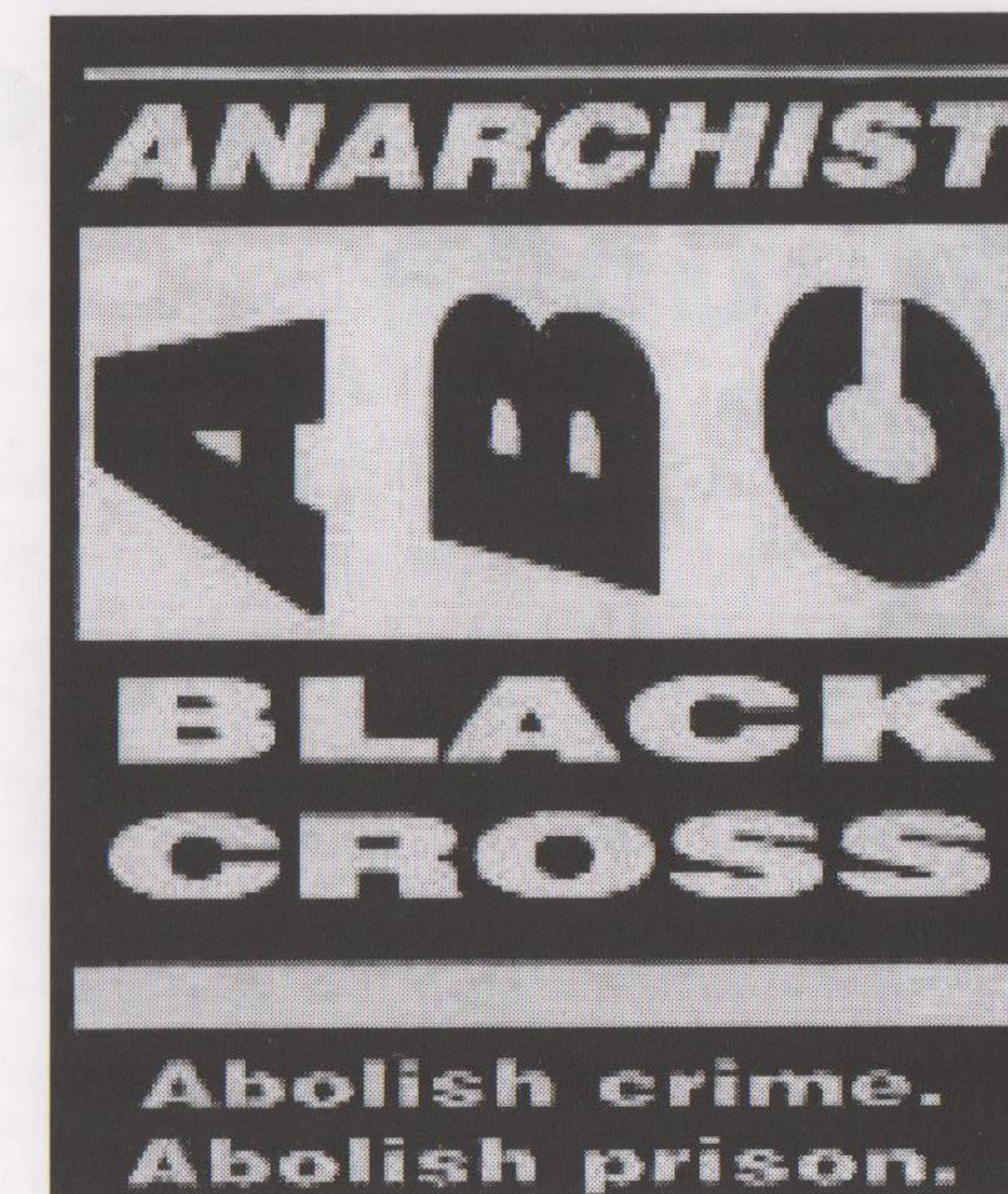
*Towards a Fresh Revolution* by The Friends of Durruti, writings from the much misunderstood group who attempted to defend and extend the Spanish Revolution of 1936. 75p plus postage.

Malatesta's *Anarchism and Violence*, an important document in the history of anarchist theory refutes the common misrepresentation of anarchism as mindless destruction while restating the need for revolution to create a free and equal society. 50p plus postage.

*A Brief Flowering of Freedom: The Hungarian Revolution 1956*. An exciting account of one of the first post-war uprisings against the Stalinist monolith. Also includes a history of the Hungarian anarchist movement. 60p plus postage.

All Stormy Petrel pamphlets are available from ACF (London), c/o 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1 7QX.

**Coming next: *The Italian Factory Councils 1920-21*.**



## Books to prisoners

ESTABLISHED IN 1996, Haven Distribution has been supplying free educational literature to prisoners in the UK. If you are in prison and would like a copy of their catalogue, send a second class stamp to the address below.

The distribution exists on a shoestring budget and is voluntarily run. It is an essential service for prisoners. If you can afford a donation or a monthly standing order it would be appreciated.

Cheques/postal orders to: Haven Distribution, 27 Old Gloucester Street, London WC1N 3XX.

## Friends and neighbours

If you like what you read in *Organise!*, you might be interested in these:

*Counter Information*. Quarterly newsheet produced by independent collective. Information on struggle worldwide. Free copy with SAE from Pigeonhole C1, c/o Transmission, 28 King Street, Glasgow, G1 5QP, Scotland.

*Collective Action Notes*. Bulletin produced by CAN. Information on struggles worldwide. Contact PO Box 22962 Baltimore, MD 212, USA.

## Out again!

*The Anarchist Movement in Japan*. The fascinating account by John Crump of Japanese anarchism from the late 19th century onwards. Japan had an anarchist communist movement between the World Wars that numbered tens of thousands. The AF have reprinted this popular ACE pamphlet. £1.80 plus SAE from AF c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

## J18 prisoners

### Kuldip Bajwa

ON 7 FEBRUARY, Judge Bathurst-Norman sentenced Kuldip Bajwa to 21 months imprisonment for his vigorous defence of the J18 Carnival Against Capitalism when it was attacked by heavily tooled-up riot police. The judge admitted making an example of him because "he encouraged others" to resist. Undoubtedly the racist police specially targetted Kuldip because he is Asian.

You can write to Kuldip or send him publications at: Kuldip Bajwa, DN 7230, HMP Brixton, Jebb Avenue, Brixton, London SW2 5XF. Donations to his campaign can be sent to: Kuldip Bajwa Political Prisoner, BCM Box 7750, London WC1N 3XX.

### Onofrio LoVerso

ONOFRIO LOVERSO got 12 months for violent disorder at J18 on 29th September 1999. You can write (especially in Italian) to: Onofrio LoVerso-TC 3014, HMP YOI, Remand Centre, Bedfont Road, Feltham, Middlesex, TW13 4ND.

The police have published a 'rogue's gallery' of 150 activists involved in J18 and have so far arrested 70. This shows the concern of the State in repressing any movement against global capitalism. Since then, they have filmed demonstrations and spied on hundreds of meetings.



# AF joins the International of Anarchist Federations

THE ANARCHIST FEDERATION has been accepted as the British affiliate to the International of Anarchist Federations/l'Internationale des Fédérations Anarchistes (IFA).

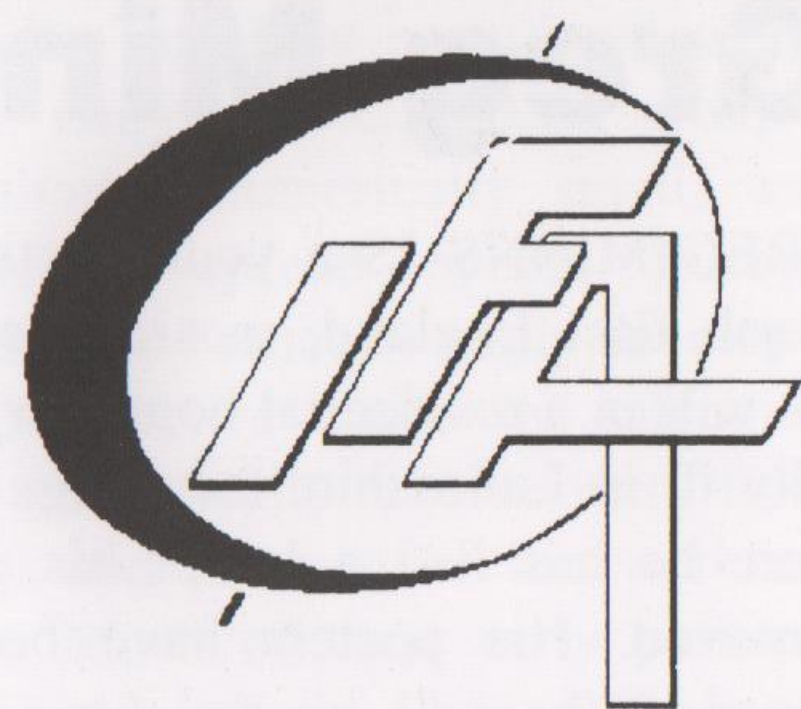
The IFA was created at the international anarchist congress which took place in Carrara, Italy, between August 31st and September 5th, 1968. A previous congress held in London in 1958, had set the ball rolling to create an anarchist international; and reaffirmed the desir-

ability of international organisation, which traced back to Amsterdam in 1907. Unfortunately, despite this initial involvement from London, there has, until now, been no British affiliate.

The 6th and most recent congress of the IFA took place in France in 1997. It was attended by delegates from some 15 countries and four continents, including a delegation sent by ourselves.

The IFA is concerned with building international relations:

to build a co-ordinated global movement; to increase solidarity and activity; and to spread information and resources as widely as possible. Obviously, these are giant ambitions and much work will be needed to achieve even some of them. The AF is committed to the ideals of internationalism, and there is of course, no alternative to global resistance if we are to begin to challenge the domination of capital. It was therefore felt that our aims were compatible and



Logo of the International of Anarchist Federations

that our affiliation would be of mutual benefit.

The IFA now has sections in Argentina (FLA); Britain (AF); Bulgaria (FAB); France, Belgium and Luxembourg (FAF); Germany (i-AFD); Italy (FAI), Spain and Portugal (FAI).

## Letters

### Dear Organise!

Revolutionary greetings to you from the center of fascist oppression – the gulag state of Texas.

I recently obtained a copy of issue 52 of *Organise!* from a fellow anarchist here at the Walls Unit. Your article 'Confusion over Kosovo' was refreshing to read after seeing so many other convoluted sectarian rants in so-called revolutionary publications.

I agree wholeheartedly that anarchists must not be duped into siding with nationalistic self-determination movements, no matter how despicable the other side may be. Such movements work in opposition to international working class soli-

arity and must be avoided like the plague that they are. To rephrase a quote by Simone Weil: "Whether the mask is labelled KLA or Serbian fascism, our adversary remains the apparatus – the bureaucracy, the police, the military."

To take sides in such conflict (other than the side of revolutionary class struggle) is to fall prey to the old capitalist scheme of divide-and-conquer. We as revolutionary anarchists must separate ourselves from the din of confusion over such matters and hold firm to an internationalist perspective that opposes all forms of authoritarianism, whether left or right.

The position of "No War but the Class War" is a cop-out

only to those people who have not yet thrown off the shackles of the nationalist mindset. We still have much work to do in educating the working class as to where their interests should really lie. World revolution without boundaries must be our undivided focus, educating the working class to move beyond their petty tribal conflicts, which only help fuel capitalist imperialism. Thanks for standing firm and getting it right.

You may also be interested to know that several of us revolutionary-minded prisoners have begun publishing a revolutionary zine called *Chain Reaction*. It's geared mostly towards raising political consciousness in prisoners and brings together prisoners from both the anarchist-communists and libertarian socialists. Copies are being distributed through South Chicago ABC Zine Distro and Claustrophobia Collective in Baltimore. I think another distro in New York is also distributing copies. We are looking to work together with other anarchist and libertarian socialist autonomous groups. Though our focus is generally on Texas prisoners we are internationalists who oppose all artificial frontiers.

Good revolutionary anar-

chist material is not always easy to come by in this part of the world. I would appreciate any offerings appreciate any offerings of literature you could send this way.

If you would be interested in receiving a copy of *Chain Reaction* to see the kind of agitating we're doing, send \$2 to South Chicago ABC Zine Distro, PO Box 721, Homewood, IL 60430 USA Request issue 2, it's the best.

We're hoping to sustain four issues a year if the support is there. Currently we're reaching approximately 200 prisoners. But with a prison population in Texas of 150,000 our circulation is just scratching the surface. One thing about scratches, though, is they can end up infecting the whole body. That's our goal.

Keep up the agitating. I believe the moment for anarchism has arrived and we must seize the opportunity. Onward to the revolution! Let me hear from you

in solidarity  
Ronald A Young,  
Huntsville, Texas

Chain Reaction is also on the Internet at:  
[www.worksintl.com/chain\\_reaction](http://www.worksintl.com/chain_reaction)

### Essays Against the Megamachine, David Watson, Autonomedia, 327pp

For over 30 years now the Detroit-based journal *The Fifth Estate* has been at the cutting-edge of North American radical politics. Originally conceived as a liberal, occasionally leftist, project, it quickly adopted a more anarchist stance towards the end of the sixties in response to a world-wide upsurge of interest in revolutionary politics.

Their anarchism always came with a critical edge to it, though, animated as it was not only by ongoing counter-cultural and ecological concerns, but also by a willingness to learn from other currents such as situationism and the writings of key ultra-leftists such as Jacques Camatte. By the early 80s, however, dissatisfaction with the explanatory depth of all such ideologies led the collective to declare that all the 'isms' were now 'wasms', and to begin a long period of political reassessment.

A key concern was the shared understanding that the present crisis wasn't just the outcome of economic relationships of capitalism *per se* but was rather the end result of a much wider and all-encompassing social system that predated capital by hundreds, if not thousands, of years.

Later labelling this system 'the Megamachine, attention was focused in particular on such areas as the role of work, the ideology of progress, the supposed neutrality of technology, and the nature of industrialism, an analysis of which quickly began to earn them as many enemies on the Left as they had previously earned on the Right.

A developing interest in the lifeways of non-industrial and tribal peoples by way of contrast to the norms of contemporary society, also led many on the left to condemn them as hopeless romantics, thoughtlessly eulogising primitivism

and denigrating all that was modern and rational.

A key figure in all of this was the writer and poet, David Watson, who, writing under the *nom de plume*, George Bradford, was the author of many of the lengthier polemics in the journal. *Essays Against the Megamachine*, published by Autonomedia is a recent collection of such essays and although only a few have been amended and updated, they remain just as fresh and relevant today as when they were first written.

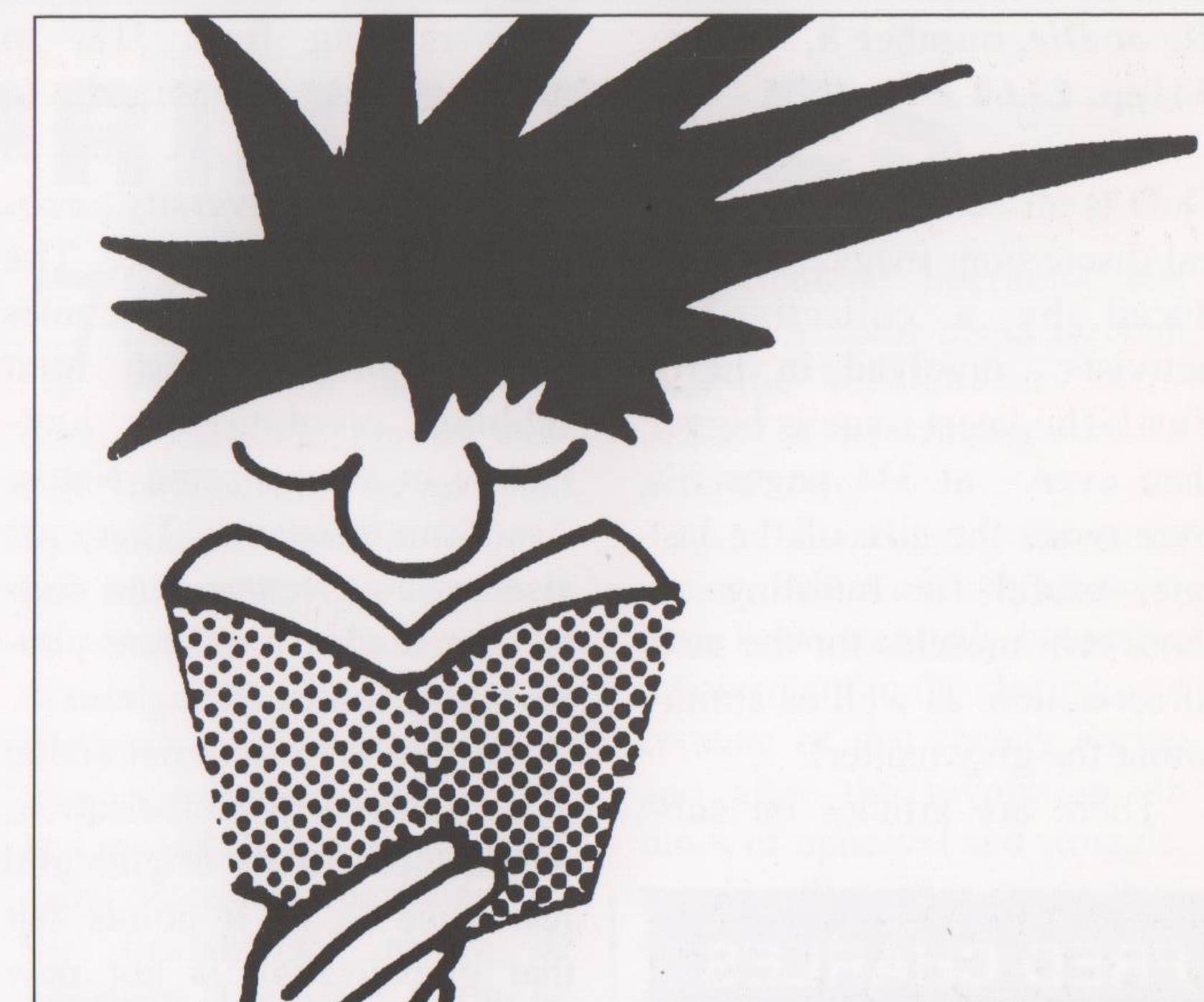
One of the first things that struck me on reading this anthology is how much common ground there really is between Watson and more traditional class-struggle anarchists, and that despite the attempts by Bookchin and others to depict him as some sort of starry-eyed new-age mystic. 'The fall of communism and the triumph of capital' is, for example, a well-written essay charting the demise of Bolshevism that draws extensively on the writings of, amongst others, libertarian socialist Paul Cardan (Castoriadis).

'Deep ecology and environmental philosophy' meanwhile, stands out as an effective rebuttal of the more reactionary arguments put out by this sometimes quite dangerous school of thought.

'Remarks on the 1992 election' is a passionate attack on the present state of mass politics in the United States, that would not look out of place in any anarchist pamphlet, whilst 'These are not our troops, this is not our country' is a Chomsky-like analysis of the Gulf war conflict as it occurred.

Finally, 'Looking back on the Vietnam War' sees Watson writing in a more personal vein, recounting both his youthful experiences as an NLF flag-waving militant and at the same time angrily exposing the whole series of myths that have grown up around the conflict.

Predictably enough, Watson enters more controversial terri-



tory when he critiques technology and industrialism in such essays as 'Against the megamachine and civilisation' v. 'Buck: empire is ecological destruction'.

Most class-struggle anarchists will find much of his anti-technological analysis hard to swallow. The whole question of how to situate technology within the larger context of capital remaining as unresolved as ever. Likewise, Watson's largely anthropological analysis of the emergence of political coercion and economic exploitation in human society will also be problematic for many, failing as it does to assign any really important role to capitalism itself.

That said, the arguments put forward do manage to shatter any myths about 'primitivism' being simplistic and one-dimensional in its outlook, Watson's ability to avoid caricature being particularly welcome here.

Not all of the essays are of the same high quality though. 'Anarchy and the sacred' stands out as a disappointing reprint of a debate that emerged in the US anarchist scene in which Watson's attack on "instrumental rationality" in general, and died-in-the-wool atheists in particular, led him to embrace some sort of reconstituted paganism. The essay 'Insurgent Mexico: redefining revolution and progress in the 21st century' also has a strange

sort of confused quality to it, all the more so for his comment that he hopes the malnourished peasants of the Zapatistas will be fighting less for 'things' and more for 'being'!!

In addition, it is sometimes too easy to be swept away by the sheer power and vivid imagery of Watson's language, his skills as a poet no doubt coming into play here. On reflection, I couldn't help but feel that one of the critical shortcomings to much of the writing is that it carries with it a certain vagueness, so that anyone looking for definite answers to societal problems will be inevitably disappointed (something which, incidentally, the author admits to with disarming humility).

All in all, though, the collection is certainly worth a read, particularly if you haven't come across *The Fifth Estate* before. Watson emerges throughout as an intelligent, likeable, and committed activist, and as someone open to new ideas and debate. An important and dissenting voice, he deserves to be heard.

### Organise! index

A list of the articles, reviews and letters from *Organise!* issues 14-43. Send a Press Fund donation payable to AF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1 7QX.